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AN AGE HENCE

George L. Welch





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AN AGE HENCE

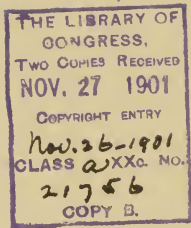
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

GEORGE THEODORE WELCH, M. D.

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AN AGE HENCE.

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AN AGE HENCE.

WHO has not felt in his soul the wrong
Death does to his sense of art—
To the statesman's scheme, the poet's song,
And the lover's glowing heart.

Just as the sphinx leans forth to tell
Her mighty secret to the brave,
Comes a spectre cold, with shroud and knell,
And silence of the grave !

But marches the world in triumph on,
To the music of rolling spheres,
Till the heavens glow white with the blaze of dawn,
And God in the midst appears.

May he grant the prayer of souls asleep,
And wake them one little hour,
To gaze on the glory of men who reap
The harvest of his power !

SPRING.

BETWEEN the midnight and the morn,
Thin clouds arose, and faint winds sighing
About the caverns, heard replying,
From pines upon the hills forlorn,
That called unto the gloomy sea :
And which began uneasily
To feel the crawl upon its breast
Of trickling streams—the darkness stirred,
Like a ghost in drear unrest,
Seeing far off the morning smile—
And on all sides strange sounds were heard ;
And winter, prone upon his face,
Long lying, with his bony beak
And steely claws the broad zones holding,
Stung through amazement with disgrace,
Did feel his cruel grasp unfolding.

With hollow rage, his wings, meanwhile,
Bat-like he beat, as he would rise
Bearing his quarry through low skies,
To some dim shore forever bleak !
But e'en to save himself, too weak,
The dismal dragon now lay dying :
Into the air his breath was flying !

MORNING.

OUT I looked upon the morning—
Gave my soul the eagle's flight—
Where the haughty sun in scorning,
Fused the planets into light.

Not a star was seen, the glowing
Depth of space was pure as flame,
Where late the tides of night were flowing
Thick with worlds of largest fame.

Molten all to thinnest ether,
But the round earth, far withdrawn,
Shining in the perfect weather,
A jewel at the throat of dawn !

THE PROBLEM.

GIVEN, a bit of crescent shore,
With dreamy heavens bending low,
The hours, sweet pilgrims, loth to go,
The wind like wine, the sea aglow
And murmurous with the day's delight,
And bring, from somewhere out of sight,
Oh, time, the woman I adore !
Just as I saw her on that day,
And heard her speak, and crept more near,
Soul-charmed, her tender voice to hear,
Love-charmed to touch her blessed hand,
And looked the love I could not say,
But her's was quick to understand !

LOVE.

WANTING eyes, true love can feel,
Every sense is tipped with fire ;
Out of woe he works his weal,
Such the strength of his desire.

Cold and grim the convent walls,
Pallid is the nun who kneels ;
As sweet music faints and falls,
Love into the cloister steals.

To the maid in guarded tower,
Slumbering in the cold moonbeams,
Like to Danae's golden shower,
Love descends in charmed dreams.

Bolts and bars have not withstood,
Nor the might of armed men,
When he comes in wrathful mood
To possess his own again.

L

At his cry, the coward, death,
Slinks into his cavern dark ;
Whilst he blows life's tranced breath,
To a re-illuminated spark.

He unwinds the dragon's coils
War hath thrown about the earth,
Winds it in his sweeter toils
Till the seasons roll in mirth.

War depopulates a sphere—
Love can make it live again,
While the hills and valleys drear
Blossom into homes of men.

Life his mighty empire is,
Time his servant, day and night
In delirious dance are his,
Bosoming his vast delight.

PSYCHE.

HER heart for very gladness,
On her red lips ripples o'er,
As the foam of summer seas
Lightly breaks on a coral shore.

Her words are like a flight of birds
Across a morn of May,
Which, if they stay their teasing wings,
Break into roundelay.

I think of fawns and fairies,
When her step glides into dance,
But fancy finds no symbol,
For the witchery of her glance !

One rapid moment into mine
She darts her soul, and flies !
Mocking the secret she has learned,
In my despairing eyes.

AZRIEL.

ONE came to her at the dawn,
Singing sweet a roundelay,
“Rise!” he said, “I must be gone!
Thou must follow on the way!”

“Whither? whither? I am faint—
Fever-wasted, see me lie!”

“Leave thy flesh, thou darling saint!
Wings shall bear thee through the sky!”

“But I leave a grief behind—
My true lover loves me so!”

“What he loses he shall find—
Who waits longest still must go!”

“Gentle spirit! take us both!”
Cried the lover on his knee—
Came the answer, sad and loth,
“Never went but one with me!”

Light and song, and ravishment
Of the morning wide was blown,
To their wooing forth she went
A spirit in the great unknown.

WHEN THY DUST TURNS FLOWER.

TOUCH hands and kiss me with fond lips,
And spare not love, for an hour draws on
When death shall hold thee in eclipse,
And my soul shall find no dawn.

Live the life and hold me fast,
Ere, adrift, on a mighty sea,
I lose all hope, and the bitter blast
Shall bear me far from thee.

For who shall tell when thy dust turns flower,
And I in the wind go driving by,
If each feel each in that lonely hour,
Love-drawn in the silence nigh !

But we, who have loved so dear, so long,
I can not believe but fate would call,
Away in one soul, like a mingled song
Sung close to heaven, in the lone night-fall.

AN EPICUREAN SONG.

ON some isle green-bowered in the river,
Let us sit, and weave us a song,
Forgetting the day and its sorrow ;
While the current both dark and strong,
With a noise like the tramp of armies
Sweeps onward to the sea,
Whose bitter waves are hungry
For the wrecks of eternity.

For when has toil and trouble
Saved men from the darksome grave !
And when could pain and longing,
Reach hands to the brink and save !
Could the dripping sword of the hero
Keep the fiend of death at bay,
When gaunt and famine-wasted,
He would rend the life away ?

Can the cunning charm of his tongue
The orator avail?
Can the Cloister shield the nun
At her midnight vigils pale?
Can the fervent glance of beauty?
Or the poet's laurel crown?
The wisdom of the sages?
Or the glory of renown?

These fall and men forget them,
While another race succeeds;
And the treasured lore of ages,
Is cast in other creeds:
And only they are happy
Who strive not with their fate,
But seize the present moment,
With all its vast estate.

For the past is gone forever,
And the future no man knows ;
But eternity is fashioned
Of the day that comes and goes.
And the draught to day untasted
Shrinks to the dregs to-morrow,
And mirth has flown with yesterday,
Leaving the dull-eyed sorrow.

There is silence behind us ; before us
The fates are cold and strong ;
But the present is ours, and its glory,
Its light, and its warmth, and its song.
Then love and gather the laurel,
For the river is cold and deep,
And if the dead are immortal
They tell not in their sleep.

THE DANCE OF DEATH.

THE DANCE OF DEATH.

WITH wild hands clasped above her eyes,
Toward the setting sun, the night,
Fled a stricken thing of woe :
And the witch moon, down the skies
Turned her awful face in flight
Into depths no thought may know.
Like a serpent the wind did shrink
Down the valley dark and drear,
And crept in his cavern, upon whose brink
Echo leaned and could not hear;
And not a living thing appeared
In the darkness strange and weird,
But the bats, on musty wings
Wheeling drearily to and fro,
Where the dead men sat upon their graves,
Speaking unutterable things,
Each to his neighbor, soft and low,
Like the murmur of dying waves.
To see them was a fearful thing !
One raised his frightful skeleton hand
To his fleshless jaw as if he mused ;
And one extended his bony arm,
As if in debating, his mind refused

Some logic his neighbor had uttered.
While leering at both, as he sat alone
And played with a toad on a mossy stone,
A fool his gibberish muttered.
And the ear could hear with chill alarm,
An idiot clanking his sullen bones
In a broken vault ; and hollow groans
From one who was slain in his sleep.
And there was a widow, as one might guess,
From her air of incertitude, and brave distress,
Who ogled a bachelor, who gallantly bowed
In return, o'er the heads of the ghastly crowd,
While her eyes drew him over to meet her.
Creaked his knees as he rose, and at every heap,
Of the sodden earth, his feet were
Caught in the tangling grass that grew
In rank luxuriance and wet with dew,
From the sides of the smothering graves.
She gave him her hand and a seat by her side ;
Whispered he low, and low she replied,
While the ghost of a fan she waves ;
And her silken weeds about her clung—
The old enchantment was on her tongue ;
The nightingale was calling.

A coquette on a broken stone,
Sat, like a princess on her throne,
While skeleton wooers were falling
About her feet, as at a shrine.

Ah, truly, she,
Were a grievous sight for a man to see,
Who living had loved her, and thought her di-
vine !

An old crone held a child on her knee
Wasted beyond our God's mercy !
Phantom children were gathered round,
Sitting silent on the ground,
While the nurse a fairy tale was telling
Of the Living-Land, where men were dwelling.

About a fiddler—who, on earth,
A harum-scarum, jolly fellow,
Could tune long winter nights to mirth,
When steaming punch had made him mellow,—
A round of clattering shades were seen
In true witch-dances on the green,
While faster his sharp elbow flew,
And faster reeled the goblin crew.
Through some the glare of the livid moon
Shone dismally upon the ground,
While they flickered like funeral flames to the
tune,
In joyless motion, and made no sound.

One who had died in his country's wars,
Stiffly aloof a sentinel stood ;
His front was turned to the planet Mars,
And brave was the foe who dared intrude.

Up in a tree was a slumbering dove,
Beneath it were two who had died for love :

And the hot surprise, the rapier keen
Thrust right and left in fury's hand,
And the counter stroke with a dagger lean—
All these were as they had not been ;
So long forgotten in the land.
In her lover's grave they buried her deep,
And locked in each others arms they sleep
While the ages roll away.

Alone on a mouldering slab there lay
A poet, who looked on the misty sea,
And dreamed a song of eternity.
The breath of the rose about him was blown,
And the heaven's starry splendor
Was mixed with the shadows about his throne,
To a half-light pure and tender.
Too young for his fame he had died at morn
With his songs unsung and his dreams unblown ;
In the brooding silence he slept forlorn,
For his heart was dust and his name unknown.
But his sorrowful face as he lay in his grave
Had haunted the spirits in heaven,
And the source of all mystery, back they gave,
Since men with their doubts had striven.

For, oh, 'tis a sorrowful sight to see
The earth as she rolls 'mid her beauteous clouds
Down the boundless plain of infinity !
For the dead men lie in their mouldering shrouds,
With their meagre faces and hollow eyes
With a look of reproach, turned up to the skies !

The brackish water from vaults has dripped
In the faces of women fair ;
And from some, like a robe, decay has stripped
The flesh, and the bones laid bare.

And some that starved on desert plains,
Were food for bird and beast,
And their bones were polished by winds and rains
Like the ivory of the East.

And some look up through whelming seas
From a thousand fathoms deep,
Where the gnawing fish in the oozy lees
Of the ocean never sleep.

And some have died and left no sign
That mortal eye can trace,
But have left the mould of the form divine
Glassed in each silent place.

For oh, the cruel years have sown
Men's lives like an ashen snow,
And the drifting dead on the dead are strown
Till nations are lost below.

And all around the globe they lie,
Where the moon beholds them from on high,
And the shuddering stars—a dreadful sight !
Pallid and wan, the livelong night

They gaze into the sky
Through their filmy lids, for they cannot sleep,
And awful thoughts upon them creep,
Then cold, like a stream flow by.

They hear the grinding of the spheres
As the planets roll around,
And the distant fall of stars
Creeps through the lucid bars,
And even the slightest sound
Of life above the ground,
Jars on their painful ears.

Oh, ye, who walk among their mounds
In the pleasant light of day,
Sweet be the flowers, and blithe the sounds
That on the soft winds stray ;
For ye may not know, how sad below,
The dead men lie for aye !

But the sun, he knows it, and cannot bear
Always to look on their despair,
So draws himself to the South away,
And stands far off in the wintry air.
And the stars shrink back ; and the earth a-cold,
And to hide her shame, wraps fold on fold
Of ermine about her pallid clay.
Then like a ghost, far off, she seems ;
Or like a spirit seen in dreams ;
Wrapping her desolate arms around
The dead in her bosom lying,
With head bent low, without a sound,
Through dismal regions flying.

Then the pitying stars stoop down at night,
And the sun returns at morn,
And they lure her back from her awful flight
And soothe her fate forlorn.
The sun sends down to her barren plains
The season of mists and mellow rains ;
And ever between the fitful showers,
April is sowing the seeds of flowers.
For the sun a mantle of flowers would spread,
To hide the sorrowful eyes of the dead.

But when the days grow sweet and warm,
And the mocking bird sings in the tallest trees
Like a hundred birds, and the lingering breeze
Like a vagrant strays from farm to farm ;
When the hyacinth's delicious breath
About the garden walks is blown,
And the daffodil yet lingereth
In the meadow all alone ;
And the violet in woodside ways,
And the pink arbutus on the hill,
And the dandelion is all ablaze ;
And merrily sounds the clack o' th' mill ;
When forest leaves are all apout,
And children in the green lanes shout,
When cottage windows open stand,
And the voice of Spring fills all the land,
The dead men can not lie at ease.
They hear the deep melodious seas,

The streams that carol as they fall,
The coo of doves, the lambkin's call,
The murmurous drone of busy bees,
The whirr of swallows' wings, and then
The blessed voice of living men.

A desperate longing, and desire
To be once more on earth, like fire
Burns all their souls to agony.
They can not stir—they lie supine,
And see on high, the glad sunshine,
And the many living forms that be :
Above, the fairest flowers are blooming,
Lovers in the twilight walking,
Arm-embraced and lowly talking.
Oh, it is horrible to lie
And count their footfalls passing by,
Each one knocking at your tomb,
As if the fiends that wait on gloom,
Would tantalize you with your doom !

And when at last the voices are still,
The whip-poor-will calls on the lonely hill,
And clouds o'er the moon are sailing,
And the winds to the streams are wailing,
That answer in monotone :
The dead can not sleep as they lie alone,
But wary and tense, till the earliest morn,
When far and faintly like a horn
The cock is crowing from the eaves,
And the small birds stir 'mid the velvet leaves,

And twitter but half awake, they lie,
Seeing the flush of the splendid sky,
And hearing the mole, as he saps and mines
For the earth worm's brood at the foot of the
vines.

And things fast locked from living ear
Each one lying alone can hear :
The grass above him growing lush,
And the flower roots that grope in the mold,
And the beating heart of the little brown thrush,
As he picks his food 'mid the dew drops cold.

But now 'tis the midmost week of May,
When the earth goes forth like a blessed bride,
To meet the sun on his crimson way
As he comes in his royal pride.
The smell of the peach and the apple blooms
Are in her robes, and in her hair
The orange wreath, and the faint perfumes
Of the half-blown rose, are everywhere
About her steps, and her glorious eyes
With a bashful fear search all the skies,
Where the joyful birds before her sing.
And the days, fair daughters of the Spring,
The magnolia's dripping chalice bring
Where the night distilled her dewy wine ;
And lilies gathered in the dark
Asleep on the lake, and the sweet woodbine—
But hush ! The voice of the herald lark

Is heard in the heavens ! He spies afar
The approach of the god, and the morning star
Faints suddenly out ; while tremors run
Sweet through her heart, as she meets the sun.

One kiss ! and the dead men start in their graves !
As when the warm gulf-stream thrills with its waves,
In the glittering North, the furthest isles,
And they break from their slumbers. The glad
sun smiles,

But the earth falls aweeping, "What is it, my love?"
"Ah, dearest, the lost ones that lie in my plains !
They tug at my heart, and all my veins
Shudder with pity ! Oh, hard is the doom
To lie in obstruction when the world is in bloom !"

Then they whisper together ; and he signals the
moon

And the oldest stars, for a powerful charm.
But not till the lovely month of June
When the days grow long, and the nights are
warm

Does the magic work. Then, mysterious signs
Are seen in the skies, and the stars draw near,
And a breath of sighing is heard in the pines
When the winds are still and the heavens clear.
The halcyon broods on the mellow waves,
And the smallest flower sheds delight,
Then all who lie in unquiet graves,
If they list, come forth in the balmy night.

Some, to their pleasures, long foregone,
Yield up themselves a little hour,
But the wise, into themselves withdrawn,
Nourish the seeds of strength and power,
Waiting a mightier dawn.

Sometimes they look straight onward,
Silent, beyond the sea,
Not to the eve, nor dawnward,
But far in eternity :

And the crumbling nations fall
Like mist below their sight,
And darkness like a pall
Covers the stars with night.

STORY OF THE DEEP.

HIGH throned 'mid the lonely stars, the fates,
Sat and wove in the olden times
Webs that might snare the brave estates,
Of the gods, while they sung their solemn rhymes.

Hither and thither the great gods went,
Bearing the threads, whose splendid dyes
Pictured them in, with grave intent,
While ever the noiseless shuttle flies.

Till weary grown, and old, at length,
Half imbecile, they guessed their shame—
Knew their will was another's strength,
And died of the very curse of fame.

Then rose the sisters, weird and strong,
High over heights, with the web, till they came
To a strand where the wild stars broke in song—
Billows of worlds, that rolled in flame.

Said to one who met them there :
"This is the story of the deep—
Of the under-gods, which forth we bear!"
Then vanished like a dream in sleep.

MORTALS AND THE IMMORTAL.

SCANT are the elements for all their variety.
The secret, invisible god, over and over,
Works them, untiring, in manifold forms ;
Thrones, and deposes, and tires of the beauty
Ten thousand years could not perfect again ;
While he blasts in conception his dreams of glory,
Unsatisfied, longing, and spendthrift of power.

Insane grew he, surely, alone in immensity
Plotting and planning, through eternities hoary,
Had he not from the rock, and the rain, and the flying
Winds of the hollow heavens, created
Mortals, whose follies provoke him to laughter
Which echoes in thunder !

Unapproachable glory and majesty, sadden
The god in his star-woven silence, and gladly
He feeds the dying flames of the sun
With broken stars till the midnight blossoms,
Whilst forth he leans from the blue empyrean,
Seeing the round earth rolling under,
A spark shot forth from his forge, all glowing !
Swift flash the hemispheres, swiftly they darken,
With the mad theatre uplifted ever
To the god scanning, admiring, and laughing.

Forthright they hasten, the mortals, unknowing,
Seam with the plough, and tumble the forests,
Skim the wide waters, and delve in the caverns,
Marry, and bury, and slumber and waken,
Harry each other with mutual slaughter,
Wound with a kiss, and with false love, ruin,
Till aged untimely, sick and forsaken,
The fire within them sinking and failing,
To earth they moulder away in sorrow.

With a touch, the god rekindles their ashes !
Anew have they risen, but all is forgotten
Of the manifold toils and sorrows of living.
With the courage of demigods, all ways they hasten
Proud and insolent, cruel, designing,
Suppliant, kneeling, wailing, and dying !
The battle renewing, the tragedy playing,
To hell down mining, and scaling the heavens !
While above them, the god, on his throne of silence,
What to them is eterne, to him a moment,
Alone in immensity leans forth admiring,
Aroused from his ennui and shaken with laughter !

EVIL GENII.

THE long lean devils in the air !
Spirits unclean, whom no man sees,
On the bat's wings, and the red lightning fare
Through the wind's avenues and the storm's leas.

Whom they find ripe for wickedness, him
Enter they into, like bees in their hive,
Curl round his heart, and make his eyes dim,
Till he loathes his brethren, and all things alive.

Thus into Nero the genii throng—
Riotous devils, and with their black art
Thrust him to crimes, and hale him along
To plunge his sword in his mother's heart.

Through him, they give order, and august Rome
Is fired with their torches, 'mid shriek and yell,
Of the flying people, while spire and dome
Blazes to heaven, like a noon in hell !

From his palace roof he looks on the sea
Of rolling flames, while the fiends laugh loud
Through his lips agast, and one in his glee
Shouts through him, triumphant, and curses the crowd!

One twines round his violin strings, and lo !
As in at a window, one darts through his eyes,
Thrills down through his fingers, and seizes the bow,
To torment his fellow to musical sighs.

Writhing melodious, sounds the strain
Like Apollo departing from ruinous Rome ;
The stricken people look up in pain,
And cursing, lie down in the ashes of home.

THE SPHINX.

O H, Sphinx ! how canst thou guard the secret so
From frantic Life, pale ghost, scarce seen ere gone,
Who calls upon thee with such piteous woe,
Ere hang-man death, shall hale her from the dawn !

Is it because some god, long since unknown,
Gibed at thine ear, and whispering nothing, fled
Down dismal ways, which thou, thought into stone,
To tease frail mortals ere their hour be sped ?

Then guard the empty tomb, where no seed lies !
'Twere little worth, though germ of all we crave—
He little heeds what sun shall light the skies
Who lies forgetting in forgotten grave.

VENUS DE MILO.

THOU feed'st upon the rapturous profound
Of harmony, that needs no wings of sound
To bear it to such perfect soul as thine,
For in thy form its tendrils lie enwound.

Does music unto music's self need tongue
To tell the deeps no mortal bard hath sung?
Silence does this, and unto silence' lips,
Thought, like a lichen to a rock is clung.

THE ASTRONOMER.

FROM his high tower that dips into the night,
Plumb down he looks into infinity,
Piercing the gloom of ancient mystery.
Unmindful of this watchful eremite,
The glowing stars yield to his patient sight
The secret of their high philosophy !
The pallid ghosts of planets he doth see
Mocking the living and their warm delight,
And dying worlds, and flaming meteors,
Crying farewells ! or famine ! to the earth,
That blindly swings about the sun unshriven,
While destiny pursues. The morning stars
Leave him o'erawed and humble, and men's mirth
Makes him recoil, as would an oath in heaven !

SLEEP AND DEATH.

PALE death, and sleep, are brothers, and so near
Their kingdoms lie, clouds that arise
In death's dim land, make sleep's all drear,
And sadden dreaming eyes.

But sometimes gentle visions, rare and fine,
Like winged seed rise in the air,
Float in death's halls, and make divine
And silent splendor there.

Dreams, and forgetfulness, and poppied ease,
Sleep offers : death, the vast unseen,
And deep eternal silence : these,
A vail flows thin between.

IT IS A BITTER WINTER'S EVE.

GONE are the flowers, the birds are flown,
It is a bitter winter's eve ;
I hear the night winds moan and moan,
Like human lips that grieve.

Dear heart, come to me, ere the night,
With fancies dark, and poisoning
Of melancholy seize me, quite
Beyond the love you bring.

For I am lonely, and the past,
Yawns under me, like some old sea,
Rising without a sound, and vast
And deep as destiny.

Ah, dearest, they are false, who say,
Ghosts only rise in deep midnight !
Too hungry for the haunts of day
They throng the dim twilight.

And I, a ghost, from out this flesh,
That is my tomb when thou art far,
Long forth to thee, as from yon mesh
Of clouds, the evening star.

THE PASSING BELL.

WHEREFORE these tears? Oh, prithee, tell,
Why the dove moans in the April wood;
Or we hear the sound of the passing bell
When summer's beauty is at its flood!

Music can not fill the void
So full, grief may not creep between
The viol's strings, by love enjoyed,
As though two players played unseen.

LOVE'S TRYSTING PLACE.

I.

LOVE'S trysting place is aye in ambush set,
And all about this sweet and holy ground
Wait silent cares, and griefs fast shut from sound,
Foreboding ills, the worry and the fret
Of lonely hours, and sadness of regret.
Thus is the fatal thread forever wound
In human destiny, and thus abound
Where lover's meet, the woes they would forget.
Oh, I have mused upon the marble face
Of one late dead, when the long night of pain
Had flown away, and some diviner grace
Than that of earth, came brooding like a dove,
With most serene high peace ; and said to Love,
" Death mocks your sorrows with immortal gain ! "

II.

And I have held within my reverent palm,
The dust of a dead heart, humid and gray,
That in a vestal's bosom, many a day
Beat with the solemn cadence of a psalm.
Love was renounced for heaven's eternal calm,
With what lost prayers, and vigils, who shall say?
I only know her heart's dust silent lay
Within my hand, while my tears poured like balm,
On her forgotten memory. Love's kiss
Her lips knew not, nor child's caress, nor light
Of home was hers, nor any marriage bliss—
For all my grief, I could not envy dust
That had not thrilled at love, ere time could blight,
Or mildew, blow, upon life's sacred trust.

LONGING.

O H, for the eagle's wings !
In yon brave high clouds to float,
And their fine ethereal springs
To drink down my fiery throat :
While the great world rolls below
In the depths of the dread abyss,
And smiles in her mighty bliss,
With her bosom all aglow
To the sun-god's fervent kiss !
Below me the gleaming seas
To the roots of the hills fast bound,
By the rivers that, round and round
The zone of the earth are wound,
And the forests that shadow these !

Below me the kingdoms rolled—
Dim spots on the map of an hour—
Where the cities' hives swarm forth,
Stung by the lust of power,
And the ancient curse of gold.
While I laugh, like a wind in the North,
With a sneer as cold as its breath !
And my keen eyes mock the death

That leaps like a flame on the hills,
Torch-lit from some baleful star,
And bursts in the flame of war,
While it withers some lonely home
High-pitched, where the mountain rills
Laugh white through their beards of foam.

Whither, oh, whither, to rise
In the vast and splendid skies,
From the barren spot below?
Where honor is smirched with lies,
And calumny works its woe
On the beautiful and wise—
Alas, that it should be so!

But fair lies the earth, in the glow
Of the sun, while the heavens are cold,
And the firefly swarm of the stars,
Breathes a mystery as of old,
That pains and appals the heart!
And better seems human woe
And the hope that survives the wars,
Than the depths that we cannot know.

Look up and smile on me, love,
And woo me, sweet, to your breast,
So I fold up my wings like a dove,
That drops to its balmy rest!

THE DAWN WITHIN THE DAWN.

BEHOLD the dawn that burns
The wasting night away,
Like a strong flame that yearns
Out of the heart of day !

Back fly the shadowy host
Of evil genii,
And the pale moon like a ghost
Fades from the glowing sky.

Lo, how earth's lovely star,
To the beckoning sun rolls on,
Down the breathless steeps, and far
To the dawn within the dawn !

So you lure my soul away !
It follows, a wandering fire,
Through roseate realms of day
That throb with my heart's desire !

THE SECRET.

WHAT spirit of all the musical throng
Shall touch my soul till it break in song,
Like a harp-string stirred by a bard's unrest
Till it sweeten the fame of a name thrice blest.

But the bard sang through the instrument,
And the spirit would thrill me to its intent,
While my own deep song would remain unsung
Till it woke an age hence on a happier tongue.

Moulder my dust and mould it again,
A hundred times to that fairest of men—
Were it not that the germ of my secret, dear,
I have borne through ages that though mightst
hear,
For, ever before me, in beauty, the flame
Of thy presence lured me, till I became
Through spirals of change, in countless being,
Man, and thou, woman,—now no more fleeing !
But turn to me, love me, for time is a spark
Shines for us but the moment, and all is dark !

Nor think strange that my secret remains unsung !
Long constrained to deep silence, it lies mute on my
 tongue,
Like music that aches on the lyre, till the strings
Thy skilled hand touches, and lo ! it hath wings.

But the gods need not the lure of sound :
Thought they find in its silence wound !
Look in my eyes, speeds my secret to thine :
Deep into deep : thou knowest the sign !
Through the tremor of flesh thou shalt feel it and know—
Holy it is, and long kept aglow
Through change, as a torch o'er the heads of a throng,
To the priestess above it, is handed along,
Till the fire sacrificial breathes flame, and man's doom
In the white flower of midday one moment shall bloom.

OPUSCULES.

FLESH shrinks from the cold, but turns and blesses
The fire aglow on the hearth so golden,
So each on the world his worth impresses,
And as thou lovest, to thee men are holden.

Life is a priestess, through midnight bearing
A perfumed lamp—Oh, I bid thee beware !
Lest thou jostle her hand with thy folly or daring,
And the flame be lost in the chilly air !

Each day is an island aglow in the sea—
Voyager bound to the farthest deep,
Make free with its treasure, ere the dim bark, sleep,
Bear thee away where the shadows be !

WHITHER.

EACH spring-time, her secret, nature has striven to
tell us :

In streams, and verdure, and flowers, her eloquence
wakens,

And the birds on the paths of the winds, her couriers
hasten,

And old desires burn fresh from their ashes in men.

Wide forth we hasten, all glowing, and eagerly question

From whence we came, and whither the ages are flowing ;

To what goal, the races immortal, in vigor are tending,

Earnest as gods, and striving undaunted as heroes,

Making death a resting, and not an end of endeavor !

For out of the ashes the genius glad life awakens,

Which shakes off the dust of its sleeping and hastens
away,

Impatient of slumber that kept it one hour from glory !

SPOILS OF THE AGES.

NOT to my mind came sorrow or despair,
When all the tumbled hillocks of the dead
Greeted mine eyes, this wild and windy morning,
Roared over them the wet and bending trees,
And the low hung clouds shut out the gleam of heaven.
The mists in the flowers lay tangled—
Sullen the waters ran—
And the still-delaying swallows,
Were blown, like a forest of leaves,
Over the meadows, and out to the hungry sea.

Neither despair, nor sorrow, though hundreds were
lying,
Sordid and lonely, each in his narrow cell,
Deaf to the wrath of the tempest—
Unheeding the struggles of men.
But I thought how, only the marbles,
And no great deed, with its tongue of fame,
Nor golden memory might tell,
Who lay in this lap of silence.

When these were living, how many thousands of days
Lay open the paths of glory !
And the soul in its tangle of flesh
Struggled, and urged in vain.
But from the earth their venal eyes rose never—

Small ambition saw never the mighty stars,
Nor valued the day in its passing,
Though it bore the favor of gods,
And one with crowns came after.

But think you no hint came to them
Of a larger fulfillment of life?
Trust me, the humblest feel it,
And the earnest are armed already.
But long seems the toil and the fortune of battle unknown,
And men are lovers of ease.
So, better the day's dull bounty
Hoarded in peace, and spent in the leisure of age,
Or even to creep obscurely,
And starving from day to day,
Than to go where the high gods call,
Up from the valley and over the lofty mountains !

But, 'tis easy to look on the fallen—
Scorn them for folly, and say :
“ Better to have fought like heroes,
Though wounded, and bleeding sorely,
Borne down in the battle, and victory flown to another,
Than to have lived in ease, since death was the end at
last ! ”

Oh, ye, who are living, look round you !
The same paths lie open to glory—
The spoils of the ages are heaped for the hands of the
hero !

THE BROOK.

LITTLE brook, why laughest thou,
Whorled in meadow grasses,
When the wind blows cold from the mountain's brow
O'er snow in the mountain passes?

The rose that kissed thy lip last May,
Blooms now in Southern bowers,
And the birds that sang to thy song all day,
Court her amid the flowers.

Dark and drear lies the windy mere,
The sun is pale to sadness,
Summer is gone with all its cheer,
How canst thou laugh with gladness?

“Never winter touches me,
I stay not to brood or linger,
Over the pebbles and out to sea
I speed from his icy finger!

“A hundred trees swoon down my stream,
A thousand wild flowers blowing
Look in my eager eyes the dream,
That sets my heart a-glowing.

“I hold my glass up to the sun,
And while he looks in smiling
To see himself made small, I run,
Laughing, and still beguiling.

“Then throw it down, for a headlong leap
Over some rock's vast shoulder,
Into caverns blind and deep,
Where the bones of giants moulder.

“Thus rush I on ! but dost thou think
I am lost in the sounding ocean ?
I rise, a spirit, from the brink—
The prayer of the sea's devotion !

"I am the cloud thou saw'st last June,
In the glorious even,
Sailing near the full-orbed moon,
Like a wild swan in the heaven.

"It was I that wrought eclipse
Of the moon, lest she discover
When thou stooped to kiss the lips
Of thy earnest lover

"Now, toward the mighty mother's heart
My veins run full of gladness,
And were I man, as man thou art,
I had no thought for sadness.

"For what is lost is found again,
And never ancient story
But lends its far off gleam to men
Who give the present glory."

THE HUMBLE-BEE AND THE ROSE.

HOW canst thou, burly humble-bee,
Rifle the rose's heart?
Are there no common flowers for thee—
Bold braggart as thou art!

The rose is nature's paragon,
The loveliest of the bower,
And blooms by brimming Helicon
Apollo's favorite flower.

She lights the way the morning flies
Over the planet's rim,
And is the torch for lover's eyes
When twilight lanes are dim.

I chide no zephyr wandering late
In sweet delirious bliss,
Just parted from her at the gate,
And drunken with a kiss.

But thou, bold plunderer, avaunt!
Go sip the laurel dew
By some weird witch's caverned haunt—
The rose is not for you!

ECHO LOQUITOR.

WAS that your song made eloquent the wind
That whispered at mine ear, while slumber wooed,
And I lay half forgetful, thrown along
With shadows, on a bank of flowers dim?
“Have the gods come back?” I said, “Or have I slept,
And dreamed the dismalest dreams the lost can know
In the blind pits that swallow them from men?”
For, oh, it seemed a ringing afternoon
Of the young world, when th’ gods, like light came
down
Large lustrous youth, to roam this star again,
And not the hateful times when all are flown
But I, that once made beautiful this sphere.

When the old doom of change began to work,
There were strange signs in heaven, and on earth
Moanings, and shapes like shadows flying past—
But I, storm-stayed within the hollow keep
Of a vast cavern, was by magic slain
With slumber, till the golden age was flown.
Beyond the farthest star the gods were gone
And the bright troops of fauns and naiads, all,

And I left lonely in this world of men !
Like a great flight of birds about the dawn,
I saw them melt into the golden sheen
Of morning, thick against the glimpse I had
Of the new glories they had entered on.

Have they not missed me by their marvelous streams?
Or does new love crowd memory away ?
Ah, me ! the hours I have lain down alone
In solitudes, with memory at my knee
Crooning old tales, till I have wept anew !

And flowers wept dew, and birds were hushed from
song,
And the stilled rivulet, like a dying pulse,
Slid down the grass, and silence crept more near.

I know not if the gods steal back sometimes,
Smitten with longing for the olden days—
But would that I might teach my lore to thee
And make thee one, or more than mortal man !
This way into the woods ! The air is balm ;
The old moon shines above the pool, and here
A stream from out the cavern trickles down
And dims the forest leaves with blood.
There in the cavern lies the wounded night,
Shot to the death by morn, and all her width
Of dragon wings lie limp along the floor !
That cold wind was her soul that rushes forth !
When the sun sinks she will come back again,
Creep through her wounds, wake life, and fly away !

Hear how all sounds come amorously to me :
The cool wave crushed to foam on far-off shores
Sends a low moan to mind me of the sea ;
Bells in the air, and voices of the kine,
Murmur of floods, and slow and sullen sounds
From villages of men, the panther's cry,
The riot of the wind among the leaves
Making a flowing sound, as though there ran
A river in the air, sweet minstrelsy
Of birds gone mad to be alive, the joy
Delicious of the flowers, (thou canst not hear !)
Tune wistfully about my ears, all hours,
To steal the burden of my sorrow forth,
Until I send them back, down rock and thorn,
To dreamful ease, in valleys far away.

Scarcely the flowers bend beneath my feet,
But after thine they rise up wounded sore,
Bleeding a purple dew—this proves thee man.
No matter ! there is something in thee, still,
Not wholly mortal. Follow me—oh, on, and on !
Would you had wings ! How slow are mortal feet !

DESERTED.

EVEN joyful memories
Bring something sad, at twilight's hour,
Some shadow from the silent seas,
Some cypress from the bower.

Oh, friends, I shall not see again,
My lost youth wanders far away,
With yours, beyond the haunts of men,
In some bright yesterday !

And calls to me, "Come back, dear friend !"
And waves its rosy hands in vain—
The bitter current will not bend
Back to the golden bowers again.

High hopes and fames, the genius brings,
To bribe our manhood, as we fly
Far from the youth, who laughs and sings,
Where pleasure stands applauding by.

But send us now and then, dear youth,
From out thine islands green and gay,
Some happy memory, though in truth
A tender sadness find the way.

And yet, who knows, but on a day
When the blue sea mellows round your capes,
“God den !” we greet you, fresh as May,
While the old life into the dark escapes !

A SPRING LONGING.

WHEN the black-bird sings on the withered spray,
Tossed by the wind on the warm March day,
Spring o'er the low hills comes this way.
Every wind blows thick with birds,
Gambol the lambs, and the lowing herds
Long for the fields where the vapors rise
Wind-winged toward the summer through sunny skies.

I pause by the river, and listen long
To the joyous rapture of his song :
The affairs of men unheeded wait—
I am free an hour from care and fate !
I have grown attuned to the voice that swells
By the roaring sea, and wakes the dells
With the wild brook's laughter; with the harp of the wind
Played in the forest, and with all merry kind
The green earth round, that hold them near
To the heart of nature, and love her dear.
I am thrilled with longing ; all sweet desires
Through my being glide, like golden fires ;
All I have been, and all I shall be,
In the past, and the long eternity,
Waken within me—I climb once more
Through the olden types, as once before,
Till I wake in man, and away am gone,
With my secret, through the gates of dawn.

FATALITY.

A N hour, in a lonely place,
I sat down face to face
With the spirit no thought can bind.
Odorous was the wind,
Mellow the sound of the sea,
And the birds sang over me
In the tall trees, and far
Shone a single sail, like a star,
In the blue deep of the main.
In heaven there was no stain,
And the flowers sweetened the ground
With color, like sound
Of music to blind men's ears.
My eyes were filled with tears,
For happiness oppresses
The heart it too much blesses,
We are so linked to pain !
But my soul was one with the strain
Of singing birds, and the sea :
And I thought, on eternity,
With odor, and color, and sound,
To drift, were joy profound,
Though changing many times
The semblance of life and its rhymes.

For 'tis custom that binds us so ;
And thought that works us woe,
Ever life's problem turning,
Pained with immortal yearning
Over things not understood.
And the dead, like a Gorgon's brood,
Will not lie in their graves, but rise,
Spectral, and cold, and wise,
To threaten with ancient laws
Every quick and generous cause,
Till we yield, and stand aghast,
At the power of the terrible past !

THE MAGICIAN.

I CLOSE my eyes and look within
Where thought in silence dwells—
Secretest of hermits, he !
He shuns world's folly, and its din,
Eats pulse, and from the coldest wells
Drinks and broods eternally.

Hints of old remembrances,
Like flower scents are to him blown ;
And to-morrow, he hath seen,
Ringed with mighty destinies,
Slumbering on his cloudy throne
Built the dark and dawn between.

Sometimes through my eyes he looks
With a steadfast gaze and long,
While the world in silence waits !
For he turns the Sibyl's books,
Gathers in the seeds of song,
Or hears the whisperings of fates.

From my slumbers I awoke
In the deep and lonesome night :
Thought was at his alchemy—
Spirits, did his wand invoke
From the bowers of their delight,
Where the gods and graces be.

And the dreams did come and go—
Fairy magic, mocking time
With his blind hours sweeping by !
But methought impending woe
Fed upon each perfect rhyme,
And thought did turn his face and sigh !

FROM THE DEPTHS.

WHEN the beauteous maid had found
Age was stealing unaware,
Softer than the hush of sound
Or shadow on the stair—
Like a marble statue, long,
Stood she in a sad surmise,
If she might the hidden wrong
Search from out its deep disguise.

In her mirror leaned and gazed
As in some unfathomed stream,
Where the eyes that lovers praised,
Met her in a serious dream.
But a weary face and wan,
'Neath her own she might espy,
Faintly as a star at dawn
In an early evening sky.

- From the starved lips there came
Low whisperings, like the mood
In which nature hints our shame,
Voiced in some deep solitude :
“O’er the beauty nature gave,
You invoked the tricks of art,
Till she holds you as her slave
Even to your secret heart.
- “And wears you with her chains, and brings
Idle triumphs as the fee,
To bribe the god within, who sings
Of a higher destiny.
When god made me, in that hour
He gave the flesh you too much prize,
As the palace of my power,
Not to hide my miseries.
- “But a prisoner I pine,
In the dungeon you make fair ;
Your marvelous beauty is my sign
And symbol of despair.
I, the keeper, am locked in,
I, the genius, am the slave ;
Small wonder that the hours begin
To dance upon my grave !”

DENIAL.

DESIRE is, like the breath of flowers,
Death-sweet, and evanescent,
And perishes ere happier hours
Tread lightly on the present.
Love's longing yields to apathy—
That mildew of long waiting!
And hearts have lost their harmony,
That heaven meant for mating.

And vain is immortality
That haunts the soul in dying,
With charm of specious flattery,
From out a heart of lying.
For who to future times may trust,
That meets to-day, denial?
Can glory's root strike through the dust,
To men long dead of trial?

Pray tell me where the rose-bud blooms
That from some tender bower,
You pluck with all its vague perfumes?
And tell me where the flower,
Full blown, shall into seed mature,
That on the breast of beauty
One moment shall your eyes allure,
Then perish with its duty?

And where the promises of life
Shall grow to grander uses,
When manhood falters in the strife
And turns them to abuses?
And where long waiting and heart pain
Shall find reward of pleasure,
When wrinkled age has proved them vain
And death lurks in the measure?

Life's sacred flame but holds aloof
Death's darkness, not its sorrow,
For the strongest nature is not proof
Against the unknown to-morrow.
Too imminent the time, to lose,
In dalliance, dream, or story,
But long enough, oh, sovereign Muse,
For triumph, love, and glory.

THE BUTTERFLY.

DREAMILY on the grass I lay,
The red rose wondering by !
Nor thought the gladsome month of May
Might feel offended at my sigh—
When lo ! she sent the butterfly,
To show her sweet disdain ;
A dream, a flower, it floated by,
And mocked my dull complaining.

“I feed on dainty sweets,” said he,
“And all the balmy air
Brings me the song of bird and bee,
And not a note of care.
The world about is very fair,
I feel the warm sun shining,
The universal love I share
That never knows repining.”

“Yes, ” quoth I, but my finer sense
Perceives the gloom instead,
Nor can you keep your gay pretense
When hovering o’er the dead.”

“I only see the flowers,” he said,
“And these breathe not of sorrow,
While the blue heavens, o’er my head,
Bespeak a bright to-morrow.”

“But even wings of gossamer
Must fail at last !” I cried ;
“Then let me use them now, good sir !”
The winged sprite replied :
“For life is like the time and tide,
And beauty has its season,
Adown the changing stream they glide,
And wait not for your reason.”

THE MOMENT IS ON THE WING.

I INTO the life within the life
Who sees deepest? who can tell?
For it hides itself in a show of strife,
And blinds the eyes with beauty's spell.

Hides in a marvelous tangle of flesh
That a lover's lips might melt withal,
But can not draw through the willing mesh
The mistress it holds in thrall.

But life has given to each an hour
Wherein no shadow death may fling,
And love is its glory, love its flower—
And the moment is on the wing!

It flies, and the fire of longing flies—
Vain regrets and sorrows stay,
Youth is cheated and age unwise
Withers and withers away.

ELYSIUM.

NEVER thought I, in the old days gone,
 Love was a flower of the summer time,
 To flush in June depths, till it be withdrawn
 Like a flame blown out in its festal prime.

But to me like a purer life it seemed ;
 Two hearts but a mingled soul—maybe
 The end shall bring peace, or I have dreamed
 Raptures no human eye shall see !

For I want no heaven love may not bring—
 One touch of his lips is better than all
 The dreams of prophets, of saints that sing,
 Or hero's that feast in Odin's hall.

Out of the dark we came, who knows
 Into what light we go? this hour,
 We float like motes where the sunlight glows—
 The next, oh Love, is beyond our power !

ROSEMARY.

HOW can a fond heart love with old desire,
When seas roll in, and mountains rise between,
And the long years run desolate, and unseen
At fancy's root, wastes memory, like the fire
Of morn's white star, whose waning beams inspire
The torch of Phoebus? Phoebus dies, I ween,
Some numbing morn when winter's breath blows keen,
And the scant beams of Hesperus expire !
So Love, made pensioner of memory,
From pallor unto pallor fades away
To a wan soul, that fleets eternally !
Have pity, thou, and bid the poor ghost stay !
Morn gives her stars ! yield up your eyes to me,
Your lips, your heart, and make my winter, May !

BELLE TOURNURE.

MY poor heart stammers like my lips
When I would look on thee,
And swimming tears bring dim eclipse
To eyes that fain would see.

My passion through me winds and yearns,
Now like a sudden flame,
Now down my pallid cheeks it burns,
With shudderings like shame!

I am not I, I am become
Love's lute-string jarred to song,
By touches of some god gone dumb,
Who looked on thee too long!

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

WHAT was there in the fair girl's eye—
Girl I never saw before,
That should make my heart tremble and sigh
For one I shall see no more !

Back came my wandering youth,
Sunny gleams and flowers aglow,
And the face of one I loved, in truth,
Long, long ago.

Sweet and sad are the days long flown,
Down some sudden vista seen—
Pure and perfect they lie alone,
Immortal and serene.

Who stands midway on the height,
And looks not back with tears,
Where the stream, and the rose, and the morn's delight,
In the valley below him appears ?

That moment the sun shines dim,
The peaks are cold above ;
Glory and fame are naught to him
Emparadised with love.

TWILIGHT.

SOMETHING is lost to the morning—
 Though the wide world glows,
 Out of dark, like a rose,
That bursts from the bud into glory !

Something is lost—yea is wanting—
 That would make the morn pure,
 And give charm and lure
That would draw the sweet saints out of heaven !

I, at the outermost margin
 Of day-dawn, and thou,
 Asleep with the night, now,
What good genius shall bring us together !

ENCHANTMENT.

WHERE you lie dreaming, darling,
The night is cold and still,
The wind lies asleep on the hill,
The moon has gone out of sight,
And the stars are alone in the night.

Anon comes a tremulous sound
Of water plunging and falling—
An owl in the forest calling—
The watch dogs, ominous, cry—
For a shadow comes stealing by,
And in at your window has gone
Like the first faint rose of dawn.

'Tis the genius of sleep, my darling,
He hath borne by forest and stream
My soul away, like a dream !
For the strength of my longing grew
Like the pain of death, and I knew
No golden joy for the lover
Your true arms might not cover !

THOU COM'ST NO MORE.

ONE quiet afternoon in June
Beside this winding water's way,
We heard aloft the merry tune
Of birds among the leaves at play.
Knee-deep the dappled cattle stood
In shallow runlets cool with shade,
And wanton zephyrs kissed and wooed
The flowers all down the lonely glade.
So kissed I thee, oh, lovely maid !

Returns the season to the dale,
And flowers crowd gaily to the stream,
The black-bird, sweetens all the gale,
But thou com'st only in my dream.
A shadow lies upon the hill,
The rose is not so sweet 's of yore,
The shallow stream limps weak and chill
From stone to stone—the clouds bend o'er—
Soul of my soul, thou com'st no more !

LET THERE BE POISON IN THE SONG.

READ me some sad, melodious verse, thought-low,
In the dim silence murmuring like a stream
That drowns in its channel, to and fro,
Among the flowers that yearn into its dream.
Let there be poison in the song, distilled
From weary woe, or love long passioning,
With power to numb the soul it first hath thrilled,
Till sense on heart, warm folded under wing,
A slumberous swan I float upon the rime
Far from the day and lost to envious time.

For I am weary, ere the noon of day,
And my lorn thought, from the long journey's end
Where I had sent it to explore the way,
Comes back like sorrow to its stricken friend,
With whisperings of the mad world's mystery,
And vain pursuits that in a beaten round
End like the symbols of eternity,
And still delude, and cheat with airy sound
Youth and old age, with promise high and brave,
Till one by one they totter to the grave.

WHILE THE YEARS GO ROUND AND ROUND.

O H, to lie down below
In a long silence, sad and deep,
Where winds forget to blow,
And clouds to weep.
To hear no more the lapse of running streams
On summer days, or carol of wild birds—
To sleep too sound for thought or dreams,
Or aught the mind can tell in words—
While the years go round and round,
Till naught remains of me
That is not like the ground
Whereon you see
The red rose spring,
And the thistle drop its seed.
Time's fullness then may bring
The peace I so much need.

It can not be the passion and the gloom
Of a lost life, can then remain,
To brood and nurse pale fires within the tomb
To burst into the world again.

For all strange roots shall pierce my mold,
And passions shall arise in these,
To waste themselves on many a breeze,
While I lie here so wan and cold.
Heart's love into the rose shall bloom
On some delightful summer day,
And breath by breath shall die away
Enamored of its own perfume.
And in the gloomy pine shall rise,
Sailing low, my melancholy :
And my folly
In some flower with winged seed,
Which light winds about the skies
Shall scatter with its losel breed.

THE FALSE ONE.

WHEN at last the false one dies,
Out of memory, and her eyes,
Haunt no longer, and her face,
Vanishes with all its grace :
When the subtleties she wrought,
Come no more into the thought,
And thou look'st on her unmoved,
As though thou hadst never loved—
Thou hast conquered—live once more,
Shipwrecked, on life's fatal shore.

THE HOURI.

TAKE her, I care not,
Though once she was mine,
When youth was sacred
And love divine.

But now that she wanders,
No more she seems
Than the houri that flits
In an Arab's dreams.

I've drunk of the fountain,
And should I deny
The last draught, to my enemy,
Famishing by ?

Drink, fool, then pillow
Thy head on the breast
That too oft hath known mine
In happier rest !

THE ROSE.

ALL summer long,
The rose implored me for a song—
Languished before me, drew me with the lure
Of a hundred charms to pour my soul into her :
Outsmiled the morning, made the twilight glow,
Bade the wind hush, the stream forget to flow,
And hid in perfume, as I slumbered, stole
 Betwixt the wings of dreams into my secret soul.

What song of mine, oh, lovely rose,
Could sweeten silence, like the wind that blows
With nightly amorous kisses on thy cheek !
Soft in that wind blow Persian songs and Greek—
Sung long ago,
By lovers in their tender morning glow :
And all we dream, and all we say,
 Is tinctured by that far off day.

THE REAPERS.

ON th' yellow slope of a great cavern's eaves,
That down the valley dripped perpetual streams,
Which rose in vapory clouds, like giant's dreams,
All the long day they bound the harvest sheaves,
'Mid songs of birds, and whisperings of the leaves.
And oft they saw the far half phantom gleams
Of slumberous waters, through the glimmering beams
Of heat that down the fence-rows winds and weaves.
The mower's scythe clanged sweetly through the grain,
That with a rustling sound o'er-swathed the flowers,
Till bending toil relieved their odorous pain,
And harvest songs made dance the jocund hours.
While Pan from th' cavern heard, and sweet refrain
Piped mellowly along the golden plain.

A LOVER'S ABSTRACTION.

I.

WHEN this poor heart is dust, and I no more
Shall see thee, hear thee, thrill at thy caress,
Or whisper that I love, what sore distress
Shall seize my soul with pangs unknown before !
Still to love on, and on, still to adore
When life has shrunk into a thought ; when less,
And less, hope's anchor holds me to the shore,
Drifting into infinity—possess
The lingering desire, the passionate
Longing—I, who shall never more of thee
Be known ! Oh, 'tis too horrible a fate !
Come let me clutch at straws, ere such a sea
Drowns o'er my head and leaves me desolate—
Kiss me, ere I have lost thee utterly !

II.

Why, 'twas a dream ! some night-mare of the mind,
By fate conjured to mock a lover's bliss ;
The moody shape dissolved at thy warm kiss,
As clouds before a summer-breathing wind.

Thy heart beats on my own ; tender and kind
Thine eyes drink in my soul ; all fears I miss
In the sweet circle of thine arms—in this
Fate can not come, and death is left behind.
Why, if my soul could ever leave thee here,
Widowed and lorn, it could not further go
Than thy breast warms the air, and lingering near,
Would melt into thine own, as the late snow
In Spring melts on some flower—or in that tear
Thou would'st, thyself, dissolve, and with me go !

IN A WORLD APART.

I.

“OH, Love ! what land is this ?” my fair one cried,
As changeful colors, like the heraldry
Of silent angels, flashing suddenly,
Made rainbow flutterings on our eyes, and died
Low on the streams and flowery meadows wide.
And little sparrows sang a sudden glee,
While in the air we felt, but could not see,
The passion of some goddess glorified ;
Whose chariot down the slanting wind was borne,
Throwing a dust of rose-leaves as it sped,
O’er the curved vales and up the hills unshorn :
From which a voice unto my lady said,
“ ’Tis free for you to wander as you list,
Or make your own if your sweet fancy wist ! ”

II.

Whence are these shadows, wavering in my room,
And whence this breezy sound within my ears
Of wild-wood minstrelsy? and whence these tears
Of pleasing sorrow, making misty gloom
About my eyes? I ask, I know not whom—
Some flying Merlin, who looks back and hears,
Laughing, and sinks among the hills and meres
Of my lost heaven—while I shake the bloom
Of fresh remembered dreams upon my heart,
That lies below them like a buried thing.
For this is waking back to loneliness
When I had dreamed of paradise, and spring
Perpetual, in a dainty world apart
With my true love to worship and to bless.

III.

We were upon a little star, it seemed,
No larger round than looks the harvest moon ;
Half lost in flowers ; for every breath of June
Went wandering round this little orb. I dreamed
It was her butterfly, so fair it gleamed,
Floating in azure to a merry tune
Of winds, and waters falling. And aboon,
Its splendid clouds into the heavens streamed
Like wings, that bore us far and far away,
From pleasure unto pleasure—sweet, oh, sweet !
Transported in a glance we need not say
How much we loved—we did not need repeat
Mouth-phrases, as your common lovers do—
We looked into each other's souls, and knew !

TO REALMS UNKNOWN BEFORE.

WHO has the heart to deny,
If I dream we shall rise again,
'Neath some happier morning sky,
In some gentler race of men !

And beyond all tenderness
Of tongue to tell, shall meet,
After this long distress,
With a love divine and sweet.

And into each other's eyes
Looking, with tears, shall say,
" Under what distant skies
Had we met ere this golden day ? "

And shall laugh, and shall weep, for bliss,
And tremble with harmony :
And lips shall melt in a kiss,
Now pallid with misery.

And living and loving so,
Not unkindly, at last, shall death
Take us from age, or woe,
Like a flame blown out by the breath.

Like a flame new-lighted again,
Shall we burn in some distant age,
Ever with fairer men,
On a grander and holier stage.

And ever with wiser brains,
And richer and truer hearts,
Heirs of the lofty gains
That time has given the arts.

Till the secret is ours, one day,
And brave in the mighty lore,
With death we vanish away
To realms unknown before !

THE HOUR OF PAN.

IN the sweet hour of Pan, through ether came
An evil genius, wandering at his will,
In the glad summer-time, and all unheeding—
Till 'mong the flowers that staid a ravished stream,
He spied a maiden slumbering at high-noon,
With all the flowers about her crowding close,
Like lovely courtiers, lest the least annoy
Might steal across the dreaming zephyr's wings.
Silence above her leaned in amorous maze ;
And like a tender flame her beauty grew
Upon the genius, till it seized him sore :
And sometimes like a tongue made eloquent
With sweet persuasions, would it call him near,
Who came right willingly, but could no where
Weave arms about her, being impalpable,
Nor soil her virgin lips with sinful kiss.
And so, perforce, for joyance, would he breathe
Himself into a serpent, lying near,
And thus the maid encompass to his will.

Hushed in his coils the slumbrous serpent lay
Dreaming of Lilith, or the Thracian fair,
When suddenly his small eyes opened wide
In the noon glare, and lean his head upreared,

While burnished coil slid over burnished coil
With thrilling undulations, and he trailed
His sinuous body near the sleeping maid,
In a wild ecstasy, till at a sound
Of human steps, he vanished like a gleam
Of lightning down a craggy cloudland seen.

But to the youth who came between old trees
Like morning through wan stars, the genius fled,
And nestling round his heart, blew warm the flame
Of sudden love, and bade his roving eye,
Take in the loneliness of her, who slept
By wild trees canopied, and couched in flowers.

Desire's strong wine flew mantling to his brain,
And hints and sweets of old remembrances,
From times long past—the blood's inheritance,—
Of beauty's conquest in some other life
Lived joyously long since, began to urge :
And sore the demon plied him with his arts !
But when he thought he'd conquered, chose the youth
From all the flowers, a lily, which he laid
Heart-troubled on her breast, and stole away.

THE LORD OF LIFE.

L. of C.

THE LORD OF LIFE.

I N a forest old, and tragic,
With dark glooms and sullen magic,
Was a fount, wherein the light,
And shadow, played at day and night,
And sound and silence, rimmed, by turn,
The margin of its grassy urn.

Out of yawning aisles, in haste,
Came one who would the waters taste,
But stood looking long within,
As if he would their secret win.
Saw his meagre face and wan,
Far into the depths withdrawn,
And ghostly steed that by him stood :
And then, dissolving in a flood,
That down a chasm poured full fast,
Saw the nations sweeping past,
Frantic, moaning, and abhorrent
Of the black resistless torrent,
That to chaos, pours again,
The kingdoms and the homes of men.
Stooped, and drank the bitter wave,
And left it flavor of the grave,

Ere he rode, with laughter grim,
Down the forest hushed and dim.

But the sun broke from the cloud,
And the thrushes sang aloud
A merry din in the quiet place,
Till it smiled in flowers with a wondrous grace,
And a thousand happy things
Ran on the sward, or glanced on wings,
Till Echo, holding back her tresses,
Listens, and calls, and inly blesses
The tumult sweet, her heart longs after,
And babbles back the fountain's laughter.
Whilst deep, melodious, and strong,
The wind poured forth his soul in song,
Full of the secret of forest and sea,
And the guarded lore of eternity.

Heralded thus, came a shining youth,
Fair to look upon as truth,
And in the fountain stooped to look,
Where it opened deep like the Sibyl's book.
He saw the mighty torrent sweep
Into the vague and awful deep,
Turgid with planetary woe—
But smiled, for far in the gulf below,
The sun shone through the wavering stream,
And he saw as in a prophet's dream,
The dead worlds glow to stars again,
And sparkle into living men.

For death is but life's pioneer :
Servant, not master ; hope, not fear ;
And rides unknowing, far and late,
At life's behest disguised in fate.
And when he deems, with dreary scorn,
He leaves behind him night forlorn,
And grief and desolation brings,
But sows the seeds of happier things.
And might the remorseless demon turn,
Rising from the funeral urn
A golden vapor he might see,
Which rhymes itself continuously
With lush grasses, flowers, and trees,
And yearning upward and on from these
Through bird and beast, in air and fen,
It wakes into perfect man again !

But the Lord of Life, still young and glowing,
Looks deeper than the fountain's flowing,
Piercing deep to the hidden springs
Of action that underlie all things,
And finds accordance where the ear,
Of another, could only discord hear.
Of olden enemies makes friends,
Persuading to his mighty ends ;
Sends them as envoys, with glacier, and fire,
To widen the bounds of his vast empire,
Whence east, and west, and south, and north,
With his fair bride, Love, he looks far forth
O'er realms and creatures in order moving,
Thrilled with the rapture of living and loving.

THE MIGHTY HARMONIES.

FORTH from the heavens lean
The mighty Harmonies,
And try men's hearts, unseen,
With sovereign melodies :
Deep of sound, and echoes of the deep,
Sweeter than lips may story !
That thrill the sense and make the strong heart leap
Like a warrior forth to glory.
But some they find o'er bold,
And some are dull and cold,
And some inconstant to the muses' strain—
These, on their pinions fleet,
They leave with soft disdain.

But never the fates cut short the life,
Whose heaven-appointed work remains undone :
Rather they ripen it, like the generous sun,
And keep it free from taint of mortal strife.
Thus to great age, was Goethe's muse inspired,
To finish what his eagle youth had planned ;
And Milton, through the clouds of civil war,
Glowed, like the heart of morning's golden star,

With the vast dream that all his being fired :
And in the evening were the embers fanned
Into a bright and sunny flame,
To light the heraldry of Chaucer's fame !

Young bards have died in flower of morning's prime :
The song, half sung, has frozen on their lips,
And many a bard has mourned the sad eclipse ;
But who might prophecy their nobler rhyme ?
The blasted tree brings forth the early fruit ;
Song ripens soon when death gnaws at the root.
And some by accident were wed
To the long silence of the dead,
What time they reached far down the moody night,
At variance with the world's great heart,
And struck strange chords, beyond the sight,
To music out of tune with art.

TO-MORROW AND TO-MORROW.

WHY should I bend to times antique,
Nor dare to trust this soul of mine,
When through my tongue the ancients speak,
Their glories in my actions shine !

A thousand marches further on,
I greet the suns they longed to see,
Pained with their yearnings yet, for dawn,
And splendors which shall never be.

Coined have I been so oft before,
I feel bold memories in my blood,
And know the voices calling sore,
From phantom lips beyond the flood.

STOLEN BY MYSTERIES.

LINKED unto his glorious dream,
The artist sits by the charmed stream,
And moulds his visions in the clouds ;
He sleeps, and they wrap him round like shrouds.
By him the days run swift and sure,
And the gods have given them many a lure
Of bounty and blessing he never sees,
For his eyes are stolen by mysteries,
And his soul is thridden by songs, that flow,
From stars to stars in deeps below.

Ever to-morrow he will begin,
To picture the glorious vision in,
To the eye of the world, for the long acclaim
That follows the earnest child of fame.
But ever the morrow is up and away !
For swift are the feet of the flying day :
And mocking youth hath flown by her side—
The golden bridegroom and his bride !
The old man's hand no cunning knows :
His smile fades out like a withered rose,
Faded and wan grow his dreams, and drear,
Is the silence that falls on the dead man's bier.

Who was that, with the days went by,
And marked him with averted eye,
By the silver shining stream,
In idle dalliance with his dream?
Gathering his robe of silence round,
He stepped from the throng without a sound.
His smile was satire, and cold, I ween,
Were the hands that plied the chisel keen.
The dreamer he carves to an image of death,
And the dreams fade out at his icy breath.
Slowly he worked, for the art was long,
But deaf grew the ears to lips of song ;
The hand grew palsied, the eyes grew dim ;
And the angels grieved, who looked on him,
For gaunt and wasted, a ghost he seemed,
And not the glorious youth who dreamed.
Not a line remained of folly,
But remorseful melancholy.

LIKE A DREAM.

THIS world, a pageant, greets my eyes,
 It triumphs and is gone,
 My senses, weary of surprise,
 Gaze at it half withdrawn.

I only steadfast am, it goes,
 Dissolving like a dream ;
 The dust of yesterdays, time blows,
 Thick, where its banners gleam.

NATURE.

ALONE, through the vast eternities,
In silence my glowing dreams I wrought
In flowers of form, and destinies,
Still nearing my ancient thought.

Touching, escaping, the intricate deep,
Whence life, distorted, may issue through,
Madness and horror I charmed in their sleep,
Unmoulded, and formed anew.

Dreadful, the change, to my creatures then—
Death ! they called it, nor knew in the hour,
At my touch, they flamed into mightier men,
With the aeons for their dower !

The crawling races, the globe around,
Strained the coil that drew along,
The car of the gods, with a heavy sound
Time sweetened into song.

Lo, they delved i' th' dark, like elves, and laid
The deep foundations of these times,
In the granite of customs and laws, I made,
Like the measures of perfect rhymes.

AN ANCIENT PORTRAIT.

WRINKLED, and bald, and wan, and palsey-shaken,
Out of his bleared eyes looks the sad old man,
Nor sees to-day, but rapt and fancy taken,
Lives in the past as only dreamers can.
And smiles, and feels no pain, though restless finger
Of the grim artist, time, deep etchings trace :
The acid can not eat where fondly linger
The old-time loves and days of vanished grace.

Or, is this some dim face that out of story,
Peers with old eyes into the heart of time,
And eats its mystery, and scorns the glory
The mob approved, and poets told in rhyme?
Some old, despairing face, the pitiless ocean
Sucks from its cave, and bears aloft the while,
To drown again, with thunderous commotion,
About the roots of some defiant isle !

Some thought the gods let fall, in weary brooding

Upon the fate that wastes them like the stars !

The last bare husk, the shriveled soul including,

That once seemed master, not the sport of wars !

Alas, how poor ! and weak, and melancholy !

Where is thy youth, thy passions, and the fire

That burned through these, and left the ash of folly

White strewn, above the embers of desire ?

Youth, like a losel maiden, caught the glowing

Of some fresh face, and loosed her arms and fled,

But robbed thee, ere she went, whilst thou, unknowing,

Smiled in thy dreams, and hugged dull care, instead :

And from her lips sipped poisons cold and bitter,

That nursed thy wit, but wasted flesh and bone,

Till to thy heart the thin blood turned, scarce fitter,

Than the dank stream that crawls about a stone.

THE LEMAN.

WHOSO in the field is singing,
This drear and lonesome night ?
His voice through my soul goes ringing,
With love and its past delight.

Father and mother are sleeping,
My lover lies under the ground,
Why should I sit here weeping ?
I will rise and follow the sound.

Oh, mother, I am aweary,
I weep till the dawn of day :
Forget me as something erie,
That stole to the far away.

And father, you sigh as you slumber,
You chide me for grieving so sore ;
How oft have I felt that I cumber
The threshold of heaven's door !

I kiss you, forgive me, remember
No more, who gave you such pain,
In memory flash no ember,
To light me home again.

Shall I robe me in silken vesture,
In garments all agleam,
With jewels, that flash and gesture,
Like sunlight on a stream ?

I will go in my garment simple,
Like a lily, all in white,
And the winds that waver and rimple,
Shall herald me to-night.

Oh, Love, how your wings upbear me,
How the world sinks down below !
On thy heart like a jewel wear me,
Wherever thou shalt go.

THE KNIGHT AND THE FIEND.

THE KNIGHT AND THE FIEND.

WHO rides in silence, with the knight,
Along the lonely forest way,
Perusing with a fiend's delight,
The thoughts that on his visage play ?

And deeper drinks the wine of thought,
And enters in, and stirs the deep,
Till visions rise with glories fraught,
That make the stout heart in him leap !

The heathen hosts he overcomes,
In foreign lands, and hears the acclaim,
Of crowds, come mixed with rolling drums,
And trumpet's blast, and hurrying fame.

Of lineage old, long dispossessed
Of regal power, he claims his own,
With armies gathering east and west,
To shake the tyrant from his throne !

The fiend remits—his eyes look out,
To find him drawing nearer home :
He hears aloft the March winds shout,
Like demons down the molten dome.

And through the open, far away,
He sees the castle of the king,
Jeweled in the dazzling day,
Gleam like a sapphire in a ring.

Right wrathfully his eye-balls glare,
He takes his horn and blows a blast,
That shakes the towers unaware,
And makes the monarch turn aghast !

Right then there steps before the knight,
A sorry steed, and one thereon,
Who seems a spectre whose dim flight,
Was intercepted by the dawn.

A thousand years might not so age,
A man, but he should fairer be,
The grave itself, could not engage,
To picture so, his destiny.

The knight recoils, the charger bold,
Shudders, and whines, with trembling knee :
“Who art thou ?” Came the answer cold,
“Thy evil genius : come with me !”

WASTED HOURS.

WHITHER go the wasted hours?
Sad abortions of old time—
In a lone and dismal clime
Where bloom no amaranthine flowers.

There they grow to shapes of fear ;
And with intolerable hate,
In the darkness they await
The soul that wronged them here !

Of the hours be mindful then :
All are needed, when, at last,
Life into the gulf is cast,
Whence we can not come again.

Then our masters, now our slaves,
See them hold the fatal cup !
As we mix, we drink it up—
God make light the bitter waves !

THE SIRENS.

NOT to fly forward, is my will,
To close mine ears, or turn mine eyes away,
But through my soul to let the music thrill,
Of the sweet sirens, in their charmed bay.
For oh, the sea is dreary, and the toil
Is grievous, and our glory ends in pain :
Why should we bind ourselves with many a coil,
Who know that life and all its cares are vain.

MOLOCH.

CAN the sea give up its dead,
That have lain in its caverns long,
Hushed by the tempests' commotion,
And in the pause of the ocean
By the mermaid's crooning song !

Ah, cruel, to speak the charm,
Might waken their wondrous sleep !
For they have lost the sorrow
Of life in the long to-morrow
Of dream in the vasty deep !

They roll with the rolling sea,
But themselves, severe as art,
Care not for the waves' derision :
They lie in awful vision
Of nature's inmost heart !

Above them the white gull flies,
And the eagle, high over head,
And the ships, and the wasting glory,
Of life, but it seems like a story
Unreal and fancy-bred !

For the white gull dies on the wing,
The eagle falls prey to the deep ;
And round them lie wrecks unnumbered,
And bones of crews that have slumbered
For ages, a ghastly heap !

And if they look up to the shores
Through the jasper pale of their tomb,
On island, and mainland, the sadness
Of life and death, in their madness,
Make ever a horrible doom.

Not death, but the living, who slay !
Life makes a gorge of the dead :
“ Kill thou, and feast ! ” is the fated
Cry, of all the created,
Or they perish, themselves, instead !

The strong hold the weak their prey :
The worm makes a meal for the dove :
My lady the lamb devours,
That was slain, as it fed on the flowers—
Herself a sweet morsel for love !

LORDS OF CYCLES.

WHEN a thousand years have gone,
And a thousand thousand sped,
Still far off will shine the dawn,
Not to be interpreted.

You and I shall meet once more,
Lords of cycles ; but, I pray,
What should fortune keep in store
Were not better spent to-day !

Let the spendthrift genius fling,
Stars, like ducats, down the skies :
If he lose by squandering,
Wealth's his poverty's disguise !

THE FLIGHT FROM ACTIUM.

THE FLIGHT FROM ACTIUM.

CHARMION.

EMPRESS of Egypt, rouse you from this gloom !
This stony sorrow, marble makes us all.
Like antique imagery your maids lie strewn
In heart-beseeching attitudes of woe,
And the dumb sailors look with pitying eyes
Upon the fallen port of Antony,
And move among the cordage with no sound.
Beshrew thy heart, this grief is but a cloud
That pours itself to water festal flowers !
What charm for thee in melancholy's face,
Whose own might gild misfortune's with a smile !
Come, come, relight the world ! the sun goes down !

CLEOPATRA.

Go to him, Charmion, I am all undone—
My beauty withers on me like a weed :
Wit, from my tongue, an unstrung arrow falls ;
Grace now is contumely—I am a flame
Misfortune's bitter winds have blown so low,
I hide in embers of my former self.
Look not upon me, let me cower alone !
But oh, bethink yourself—rouse all your soul—

Light sweet persuasion at my lowly spark,
And steal upon him, wary, eloquent,—
A voice, a charm, and win him back to me !
Serenest courage shine upon your brow,
Follow to lead, retreat but to draw on.
My genius goes with thine ; oh, give not o'er !

ANTONY.

It ever was my wont, to feel my soul
With mightiest influence wield the thoughts of men !
For I in many lives have lived my own—
Become of crowds the impulse, and the fire
That fused all passions to a single flame :
Reaching abroad for empire through the arms
Of hosts resistless : with their larger joy
Thrilled to the love of twenty thousand men !
But all my Titan strength is flown away—
My glory steals a shadow ; all undone,
My limbs lopped from me, I am dead to fame !

CHARMION.

Oh, Antony, when night comes lowering down,
Shall it be said all golden days are flown ?
In all the mighty heavens, or on earth,
Is there no fortune but ill fortune, now ?
Sire, what is loss but larger room to win !
'Tis but the spending out of princely hands
Gifts, that the gods give to us, if we will—
And if we will not, we are rich as they.

It says to Cæsar, "Take the gift from me
Of fleets and armies, wealth, and wide empire !
I am aweary now : I sail far off,
Beyond the sea, to islands of large ease."

Must all thy days whirl from thee, lost in war,
Whilst thou playest tragedy before high gods
To move them at their languid festivals !
Let Cæsar pose before them—rant his hour !
But thou, oh, son of Hercules ! we bear
Over the wrinkled waters, far away.
Day shall lack margin—through the lids of morn
We'll steal like music, into larger worlds.
For level lie their waters like my hand,
And never a league but starts some island forth,
Like a strong swimmer rising from the brine,
To cry thy coming to some lofty shore,
Where, sire, who knows but, crowded on the strand,
Great Cæsar, Alexander, heroes, kings
Of the olden time, shall welcome you with joy.

Flames the old color in thy cheeks, great lord !
Then put thy soul to Charmion's lips and hear.
When like Apollo thou didst follow love,
Spurning the brazen battle at thy back,
How poor seemed all at hazard, fleets and realms,
To her who fled before, and drew thee on !
The world that was not yours to lose, is gone,
While he who can not keep it, wears the crown ;
But love who made that lost world but the ring
To set the jewel of my queen's heart in—

ANTONY.

Out serpent ! tune your wistful tongue far off !
What insolence to weave the sophist's web,
Bold harlot spider, over one long snared
By artful Egypt, and by fortune curst !
What malice, too, to speak to me of kings—
Kings of old times, and heroes of renown—
And me invite to share their blissful isles !
Me, fugitive ! Why better far to steal
To hell's remotest corner unobserved,
And be fed on by vultures in the dark,
Than show my face among colossal kings,
And hear the thunderous laughter of the gods !

My fingers like a leash of tigers, writhe
To tear these eyes that yielded to her lure.
The old heroic life had gone indeed,
When trumpet's blast of triumph less could woo
The lion in me, than her woman's tongue !

CHARMION.

Now by the gods of Rome, art thou a man !
How many in this wondrous world of ours,
From shepherd's loins, or scullion's baser blood,
Have risen from exhalations to be stars !
Before them at the threshold, strange, and vast,
As they had peered into another world,
Lay glittering populous empires, proud and old,
And seas that toiled with fleets, like dragons, chained,

And envoys long at parle, squadrons afield,
Men murmuring hoarse, and rumor on their tongues
Finding fleet stepping, arson with his torch
Giving wolf's eyes to darkness, and the wand
Of crafty statesmen lulling reason down,
With specious, soft enchantments—yea, all these
Before them at the threshold, strange and vast,
And they, unknown, jostled even by slaves.

But thou, long wont to conquer ! at thy beck
Afric and Asia rise in armed might,
Squadron on squadron rolling like a sea
That pours a deluge to the highest hills !
Thou'st given a realm to Cæsar, what of that !
If thou'rt enamoured of this trade of war,
Thou more than Alexander—

ANTONY.

Sacrilege !

She plays with language as with loaded dice—
And does not understand that I have given,
No petty realm, but the huge world away !

Is it from scorn you paint a dance of life,
And pyramid its glories to the skies,
When great resolves lie perished at their noon,
And on the rack my bold heart breaks at last !
Who would hold up the dying on lost fields
To see the victor triumph ? Who would sing
Before the gates of hell a pæan proud ?

Oh, I am lost—am broken in my prime !

CHARMION.

What wandering shadow of stupendous fame,
Coasting the glimmerings of the nether deep,
Cæsar, or Alexander, but would yield
His unsubstantial glories for your hour !
Would count one glance of Cleopatra's eyes—
Love-darting-madness armor can not fence !—
As of more worth than conquest of a realm.
For well thou knowest this paragon waits not
With beauty to make conquest, but through it
Pours such a flood of wit and eloquence,
And graces, unimagin'ble of art,
In modulations sweet, and gestures proud,
Or languishing, that all the dazzled sense
At once ta'en captive, loves beyond itself.

ANTONY.

Now, by the gods !—were't not I scorn to make
War upon women, though I fall through them—
Down hand ! the lion that hath roared with joy
Against a hunt of kings, and beat them off,
Spurning their aspen spears, and gorged with blood—
Something within me, conqueror of myself,
Throttles that lion, bids him swallow rage !

CHARMION.

Aye, so it should ! dost think the mighty gods
Gripe hard through flesh, when heaven has lost 's ac-
cord ?

Hast never, with thy vast, unwieldy hosts,
Sprawled half-way o'er a province, on a day
Come battering at some Syrian city's gates,
Arch-terrible, and found them still denied
By some bold wit that laughed at war's alarms,
And with no legions clothed his strategy
To beat at force with force, but kept thee off !
And hast not felt, as glowering down the vale,
The Bacchic rout defeated, rolled away,
That thou would'st give this wandering pageantry
To haunt his wary walls, and drive him forth,
Breasted against thee, as two eagles flown
Sheer upward into molten day, contend
Out of the world's eye ? Sink the warrior, then !
For there be subtler influences at work
On this old earth, than ever conqueror knew,
With the triumphant furies at his heel.

ANTONY.

Three days I have not tasted food, and sleep
Shrinks from my lurid eye-balls, as from fire
The darkness reels, but oh, the dreams I've had !
Fallen divinities, and tumbled thrones,
And sunken fleets, and armies wasted down
To skeletons the desert winds moan through.
And ever as I shrunk, a phantom gray,
Through ruins that once towered aloft for me,
I heard low-voiced murmurs, and I saw
Starred in the shadows, woman's witching face,
Still masking treachery with an amorous eye !

The foul fiend take thee, and thy tigress queen—
I care not for the magic that you vaunt !
Had I the valiant hearts that once I drew
To outstare death, and danger make afraid,
I'd gleam, once more, the lightning of the storm—

CHARMION.

Aye, so thou wouldst ! But when all's done, the sword
But takes the outer citadel of life,
And power however pinnacled aloft,
Must take the uncertain downward plunge to night.
Hear the brute waves that lap the vessel's side,
Shouldering the hulk each to his fellow, on,
With strident murmurs straining to the port,
Good fortune in the wind singing aloft—
Sets but the North his steel against the prow,
Yawns the black gulf, and all the obsequious host
Push her to hell !

CLEOPATRA.

Away, thou torment ! go !
There is no fluting of my weary love
In all this trumpet wooing ! Go thy ways !
What Antony ! my tiger ! of my breast
A pillow make, and on my rocking heart
Find slumber and forgetfulness of woe !
Or if you choose to beat me with your hand,
Or toss my quivering body to the sea,
I will crawl back like to a faithful hound,
And court thy anger till it sting again.

Thou art my god ! do to me as thou wilt,
Curse me, or spurn me, all is sweet to me.

I thought this day to plunge me in the deep,
Love-lorn, in grief, and frightened at my lord,
But when a roaring cavern at the prow
Called hoarsely to me through its dripping jaws,
I shrunk aghast, in terror at myself,
That I should cast into the dragon's maw
What once was treasured in your straining arms.

CHARMION.

Still silent Antony, dost thou not know
Her heart is breaking—let it break indeed—
The strings snap audibly, too rudely rasped
By anger, now the festival is o'er.

CLEOPATRA.

Cold is thy hand, my lord, cold as my own—
Death feeling death, I grope, as in a tomb.
And phantom sounds come to me in the night,
Echoes from times departed, mirth that jars,
And songs as faint as dreams in other lives.
All's dead within me but the love that yearns—
And when you go from out this life, my lord,
And come again, and go, and come again,
And find, upon a day, a broken tomb
In some lost city crumbling by the wave,
Thrust with your hand among the cerements
And find my heart, still warm with love of thee !
Disturbed you'll stand, a lonely traveler,

Night drawing on apace, and hints of days
Lived long ago, will wake a wild surmise—
A shadow stealing from the ruined cell
Will whisper, "Cleopatra" !

CHARMION.

Is he quick,
That he should hear such melody unmoved !
Dolor and passion, like the changing tides
Beat on him, and recoil, as from a rock.

CLEOPATRA.

Is this, or is this not, my Antony !
I'll beat upon this marble wherein lies
A lion sleeping. Antony ! what, ho !
Come forth ! You shall not sulk within your cave,
And sear your soul with sullen reasoning
Like poisonous acids trickling to your heart !

Had I no rights, no hopes, and no despairs,
That I should see you stride away to Rome
A huge Colossus, through the dewy brine—
The little rout of ships and soldiers following,
And faint halloos blown from the further shore,
What time I helped you to proud victory—
Now left forgotten on the jeering seas !
There throned with cold Octavia—Never start,
And with a heavy gesture beat me off !
For I have nursed your blood beneath my heart,
And borne you children, and I sorely know,

Though thou didst revel in the richest love
That ever paradised a mortal man—

But what a curse hath woman in her love !
She grows so abject to the man she loves,
She yields up beauty that might charm a god,
And wit that would a circle draw in heaven,
To be the servant of his humors dull,
The target of his frowns and coward flings,
Whilst glory seeks he elsewhere and forgets.

ANTONY.

I have neglected fortune for a tongue
That rails on me—and from the threshold loud
Of vasty empires, and the beckoning hands
Of deities, have wrenched myself away !
Oh, Cleopatra, you and I are locked
Into a barren jail, and dungeoned deep
In the wide pit of the world ! The lights are out,
And all to-morrows will be jailers' lanterns !

CLEOPATRA.

The inconstant fates were never amorous long
Of any hero—be he ne'er so bold
They'll break him on the wheel : and though you strive
Like Hercules gone mad, they'll pull you down.

But is it gracious of my Antony
That he regret the world he flung away—
Daughter of kings I am, and know my worth !

ANTONY.

Your hand, divine one ! Let me live again !
I do repent me that I sunk so low,
As thus to lie in sullen misery,
Outside the majestic pillars of the world.
My own hands flung the adamantive gates
Behind me—

CLEOPATRA.

And shall open them again.

ANTONY.

Nay, never more. And yet I shall not grieve :
For I threw love and empire in the scale,
And empire bounded upward and away.
My soul was in your body prisoned fast
In paradise, and pinioned on your heart,
To its voluptuous swell it rose, and swooned,
And sunk into its paradise again.

CHARMION.

Now, by my soul ! he bends him to her toils !
Like a man dazed with liquor, he hath drunk
Too deeply at her eyes, and vain desires
Crowd tip-toe in him ; anger slinks away ;
Despair, out-poisoned, in delirium
Pulls down the toppling world upon itself,
And dotes amid the crush of empires old.

ANTONY.

The grandeur of old days steals on my heart,
The light you shed like roses in their bloom,
The wit so apt, allusions full of flame,
The intense spirit throned in perilous eyes !
Though I am savage in my warlike moods,
Sunk in my griefs, and whetted with sharp speech,
You wake the very summer at my core !

CHARMION.

Ho, there, Ansartus, wine for Antony !
And bid the cooks prepare an instant feast—
And rouse the sleeping music on the lyre,
To sparkle into madrigals, and spin
The maidens into dances in a trice !
We'll make this wild demoniac night, a gem
For hell to pluck at. Ho, there, wine and song !

THE VANQUISHED.

O H, the strong joy of warriors in the field !
Castled in armor, seiged in glorious fight,
The valiant set against the valiant—
The hum of battle and the loud uproar,
Poured in upon them with enormous sound,
That sings the live blood to a leaping flame,
And natural courage swells into a god's !
The dazzling prize of empire held aloft,
The arbitration of a moment wins—
Aye ! but the vanquished ! low he falls indeed :
The victor's foot is on him—time and tide
Flow over him—to-morrow knows him not.
The king hath lost his empire, and the knight
Flits a dim shadow, far and far from home.

IMMOLATION.

WHEN from the battle, home her lover comes,
Triumphant rumor heralding from far,
With doubt she sees the war-horse stepping slow,
Clouded about with solemn soldiery,
And misses sound of silver caroling
From trumpets blown, and sight of banners gay.

With frantic haste she meets him like the wind,
And all her soul burns luminous in her eyes,
And searches through and through him, hot and chill,
With passionate dread, and longing, and dismay.

The solemn knights bear in their wounded lord,
The leech attends, his ominous brows grow dark.
Wonder it seemed, from clear gay atmosphere
Of sovereign May, what shadows did distil !
For irksome grew the pageantry of war,
The banners gathered mildew where they hung,
And frenzied fear gripped coldly at each heart.

A desperate longing lurks within his eyes—
The yearning of the dying for its own—
Madness that needs an eloquence of speech,
Its terror honied in a phrase of love,
By hot enchanting tongue—and his so mute !

But she is smitten with a wild surmise—
She flings her from her women, like a swan
Shot in mid-heaven, and totters to his feet.

He may not hide the secret wound he bears,
The grievous wound, the mortal wound that burns
And feeds upon his vitals, as hot flame.
But reels into her arms less quick than dead,
Groaning aloud to hear her curdling cry.

“Nay, do not hide the wound ! 'tis mine and thine !
And fierce the joy to feel its kindred sting !
Yea, but I will unbind thee, dear, my lord ;
My haste can brook no gesture of delay !
Oh, dazzling flesh, persuasion soft and dear !
Love's majesty ! corroded thus, and slain.
My heart will burst to curse the savage gods,
That beat about the earth, like fiends of old,
Dissatisfied and longing for men's blood !
These gods of war, that smite the loveliest,
And feel no pain to tread a hero down,
Or set accursed heel upon his heart !
That snuff the odor of a dying groan,
As I, the red rose, by the garden wall !

“Yet, by these cruel gods, I do implore
You tell me what your furtive eyes would hide !
I have a curdling fear, you follow far—
Your feet are at departure while they stay—
You see beyond my eyes one beckoning !
Short is the shrift, and forth I'll fare with thee,
For there's no art can medicine this pain.

Couldst thou not wait? Up, up the turret stairs—
I'll fling me with thee wide into the morn !

“ Help, help, he faints ! Nay, back, ye awe-struck fools!
He is all mine—I bid ye come not nigh !

Get to your whisperings and wait for age—
For us, the gates we force, and vanish through !

“ Lord ! how he gasps and pants for vital air,
And how my heart comes surging to my throat !
'Tis the last step—we mount into the light.

“ So far below the mighty river runs
The rocks rough gauntlet, in a wild uproar,
That midway from the summit, dies the sound,
To softest murmurs, like young winds at play—
And we who dash ourselves from the bold steep,
Shall disembodied float in the pure air,
Before we touch the elemental strife.

“ See how the morning holds his torch aloft,
And makes the dismal world bloom back to day !
Romance is on the waters, and the dales
Gleam spiritual through their mist of flowers,
Forests are at their pæans, down the winds
Mixed with sweet sounds the swallows find their way.
'Tis the choice time of nature, forth we fare
With royal heralds—take us, gods unknown !

ON READING SULLY'S HENRY OF NAVARRE.

AS lightning on a cloudy night,
When all the hooded stars retire,
One moment glances keen and white
From out of heaven's inmost fire—
The trees stand out, the rivers gleam,
The castles mantle to the sky,
And men start forward as in a dream
Across the stage of destiny !

The blinding radiance dies amain,
Even in its zenith flits away :
The night floods over tower and plain,
And fills the rim of yesterday.
The wide theatre silent lies,
The genius slumbers on his throne,
The muses with wide open eyes
In tranced visions dream alone.

So, when I Sully's pages turn,
The magician waves his wand for me,
The sacred dust leaps from its urn
And leads once more its chivalry.
But lo ! the garish day flames in,
And all the beauty and romance
Flits ghostly from the glare and din,
Back to the twilights of old France.

THE CATARACT.

THE heat-lightning winks
His drowsy lids under,
While low on the night sinks
The cataract's thunder.

Like a serpent o'ertoiled,
Down the green ledge, asleep,
His black length uncoiled,
He slips to the deep.

FIENDS OF THE MIDNIGHT.

FIENDS OF THE MIDNIGHT.

First Fiend.

OUT of your grave, brother !
Come, let us wander !
'Tis the old moon, no other,
That leers over yonder,
And nods, and beckons, and blinks, half asleep,
But ready for gossip ! Come, out of it leap !
Can't be you're enamoured
Of the lean worm so soon,
Though his tongue is all glamoured
With the sweets of the rune
He found in the brain of a poet hard by !
But these faded green rhymes, should not fool
you and I,
Who may cull for ourselves—
And the worm, let me say,
While he riots and delves,
With his rhymes mixes clay :
For wisdom and fashion
Are laid side by side,
And beauty and passion—
The beast and his bride !

My way is, to rise, then,
And snuff the East wind,
At midnight, when live men
With slumber are blind.

If you like moralizing,
At your service, I crave,
To show how surprising,
Is the wit of the grave.
For one lies there and broods,
Grown tired of long rest,
And the black solitudes
To his thought yield their best.

Look out for the edge, there,
It crumbles ! Your hand !
Place your knee on the ledge, there,
Now, firmly you stand.

Ghost.

The moon goes down.

Ugh ! this air makes me shiver !
And the night in her shroud,
Lies drowned in the river
Of yon mirky cloud !
No cheer on the earth lies,
No peace in the tomb,
Death makes me o'er wise
And saddens my doom !

First Fiend.

I beg you will pause !
I like not your folly !
In death there's no cause
For dark melancholy.

If thoughts of the past make

A coil in your breast,

I beg you'll a kiss take,

And set it at rest.

The touch of real flesh to

Us fellows long dead,

Is like wine in our bones—whew !

You draw back instead !

My instinct's so human,

That real flesh and blood,

Be its sex man or woman,

I have not withstood.

But the least said, the best said,

A truce, we won't quarrel—

A man who's been long dead

Is exceedingly moral !

The ploughman I've followed—

His horses would shy,

But he whistled and hollowed,

And knew me not nigh.

And the maid with her lover,

I've held to my side,

Nor the youth could discover,

Why his suit she denied,

Why she grew cold, nor why

He grew cold in his wooing,

He knew not, but I

Was his love's undoing.

Second Fiend.

Look out there, don't stumble

In that rut of a grave !

Mind your feet, be more humble !

Why, brother, your slave !

Something new you are leading

First time for a walk ?

Well, you for good breeding,

And amiable talk !

My lantern I'll loan ye !

First Fiend.

Thanks, Jack ! wandering fellow—

First time since I've known ye,

Your bones looked so yellow !

Second Fiend.

Black beetles and night flies

Buzzed and droned round my lamp,

And the clouds from the skies

Hung heavy and damp,

While the fever I led on

To the dens of the poor,

Where the limbs the plague fed on

Are scorched beyond cure.

First Fiend.

Here's sport ! a squat toad

Suck's a viper's chill breath !

Third Fiend.

Ho, brother, what load

Encumbers your death,

That in stupor you walk,

Uncanny and grim,

When such excellent talk

Wakes the midnight dim ?

Ghost.

Away, foul tormentor !
What invisible power
Thus hateful centres
Its spell round my hour !

Second Fiend.

Perhaps he love-lorn,
Laid down in his bed !
Take comfort, be sworn
The maid will soon wed !

First Fiend.

Dead spouse under greensward
Has no part in to-morrow,
So his wife takes a new lord
To solace her sorrow.
Out of sight, out of mind,
The old saw, remember !
Love likes not to bind
Quick fire to dead ember !

Third Fiend.

Read him some epitaphs,
They are so amusing,
He must smile, for the devil laughs,
When he's perusing !

Second Fiend.

Or bring him black cherries
Whose plump cheeks were fed,
Like these bloated strawberries,
On the dust of the dead.

First Fiend.

Or roses, whose passion
Some pauper endues
With odour and fashion
And delicate hues.
Not poetic, I own,
But the things we delight in,
Take savour and tone
Where the eye would take blight in.
Cock Crows. The fiends vanish.

Ghost.

Oh, thou Immortal !
Shorn of my power,
Thrust from thy portal,
Is this, my dower !
Famed was I, when living,
Conqueror of men,
Stern, but forgiving,
Majesty, then.
Though now my dominion
Has shrunk to a tomb,
Clipped the bold pinion
That ventured on doom ;
Still with the mighty dead
Give me to dwell,
Though throned in the lurid
Fastness of hell !
Low thunder. The dawn appears.

THE OWL.

THE wintry boughs encrusted white
With rime of snow, and far away,
The wan moon sinking, out of sight,
In frozen clouds, at break of day.

The bird of night is dim descried
In the stark branches, brooding late,
Like some dark soul the heavens denied,
And left to memory and fate.

He follows winter, harsh, and slow,
About the world, and sees forlorn,
All dismal things that death can show
Upon the crumbling edge of morn.

Unmoving rivers, lakes fast bound,
No star in heaven, night still low,
The earth in shroud, and from the ground,
The graves, half-rising, through the snow.

Along the iron coast, the sea,
Tumbling its bitter waves, makes moan,
To the icy wind, and from his tree,
He flits with his secret, dread and lone.

Night beckons him, he flits away,
Over the low hills, at her ear—
Fiend and familiar ! welcome, day !
Whatever the sorrow you bring us near.

A SUSSEX IDYL.

A SUSSEX IDYL.

AY, who shall tell the tremulous birth of love,
Or dress with gossamer his infant wings?
Ere the tongue coin its amorous currency
To commerce with our ears, the child has grown
Into a valiant youth that laughs at bars,
Or tries conclusions with the elders:
Fences with wit's light rapier, loads a song
So honey-sweet with metaphor, its wings
Cloy at my lady's ear, like melody
Upon Apollo's string, or a great gold bee,
Adust with half the pollen of the morn,
Fall'n rapturous on a new blown rose for joy!

She was the fairest of the little brood
That nursed and played about the cottage door,
And grew in modest loveliness each day,
Till all the family hung upon the child,
Who in their thoughts and on their tongues was ever.
How pleased she was to win the infant boy
Fretting the mother, at her careful toil,
And dance and sing him till he crowed with joy:
Or gather all the little ones at eve,
To tell of wondrous fairies in the wood,
And where the moon came from, above the pines
In looking on them, with her silvery face,

Or where the river ran, or the late swans
Went flying toward, adown the autumn sky.
Till all the house grew still, and from her lamp
The o'er tired mother would look up, and smile,
To see the little, white robed troop, anon,
Marshalled by Mary for the good-night kiss,
Slip, dainty elves, like moonlight from the room,
To wholesome pillows and their simple dreams.

Up to her husband would she look and smile,
Who answered with a smile, the silent man,
And both to musing would fall back again,
And both of Mary musing, and no word be said.
For speech grows silent where the range is small,
And William's feet had never wandered far—
His little world, the worn and level fields,
Ringed round with pines, o'er which his neighbor's
smoke

Curled lazily ; the pastures, and the corn
In long straight rows, kept clean as sifted sand,
His orchard, horse, his oxen and lean kine,
The long low house, and lowly barns built near,
His ancient slave slow moving at his feet.
But that his fields were poor, and scanty crops
Were garnered in his barns, for all his labor,
And that his little family grew apace,
With punctual hunger pricking him to toil,
The man had been content to live his life,
And fall into the indolence of age,
As men about him, growing old at ease,

Soon yielded up their acres to their sons,
And basking by the chimney, or the door,
Waited that longer silence and grave rest
Hid in the hillocks by the church-yard door.

But now the little mouths drove him afield,
Rising at cock-crow, quitting with the dusk,
Him, and his slave, old Isaac, silent both,
Whom, once all sore and abject with his toil,
The tender maid came to, holding the hand
Of a wee sister following, and said,
"Why, uncle, come with us into the shade ;
You're very tired, the sun is like a fire,
Here are blue flowers, and cooling grasses spread,
And swinging boughs, and mocking birds in tune."'
The old man looked at her a troubled look,
And eyed the waving wood, but shook his head.
"Come, uncle, come !" persuadingly she cried.
"Nay, nay," he said, "the slave must do his toil,"
And to the dusty furrow turned his team.
She, gazing, saw his brown back rise and fall,
Guiding the harrow through green seas of corn,
Like Nereius with his dolphins, but unlike.
For these were joyous, joyless was the slave,
With his great lolling oxen gored with flies,
In this green sea and pitiless hot sun.

Some poison of this universal toil,
And slavery of man unto his fellow,
Sickened the gentle soul with gloomy pain,
So that she sighed and turned into the wood,
Leaning her small cheek on a pine and wept.

So grew the child in tenderness of heart,
In sweet forgetfulness of self, in grace,
And grew in beauty as she grew in years.
And yet she knew small pleasure out of home,
And little was she known beyond her door.

The longest journey of her life was taken
When she was ten years old, to the great sea.
Rising before the dawn, while yet the stars
Flamed large in heaven, and in the darksome pines
The owls and whippoorwills were calling lone,
To sounds confused of winds and waters falling.
The little maiden heard the morning sounds
Almost with ecstasy, as voices strange
Calling through airy chambers to the sea.
The curious fowl perched in the orchard boughs,
Were all astir as forth the wagon passed :
All the village sleeping soundly and dreaming,
And heeding not the laboring wain, from which
Peered forth into the morning twilight dim,
The white-haired children, from their nest of straw,
Counting the houses, as they rolled along,
With boastful knowledge of each drowsy hearth.

From out his proud pavilion flashed the sun,
Waving a bright "Good morrow !" to the world,
And all the radiant romance of the morn.
And now by glittering woods, and dewy fields,
Where laughed the corn, a rustling whisper ran
On into town, to herald who was near.
The children heard it plainly, laughed, and cried,

“The oak tree tells it now, and now the elm,
And that has told it to the water !
And now the crows have heard it, hear them call !
Why, sister Mary, all the folk will run
To look at us, and make us quite ashamed !”
But silent unto rapture, Mary sits,
Breathing the morn like glory to the blest.

Dully alert, the father notes each farm
For signs of thrift, or indolence, or woe,
And brief sententious speech makes now and then,
Of censure or approval, while the wife
Makes due inspection of each farm-house gray ;
And Isaac sees the slaves have gone afield,
And with half-hearted labor bend to toil.
Thus each gleans from the journey, what he will,
While the great day goes flaming up the sky,
Unconscious of the cheek, alluring earth
Turns passionate with longing, as he flies.

They pass low sand hills, and by many a stream
Thick thrust with alder and magnolia, come
To the long street of Milton, with great ponds,
Like lakes around it, and the river flowing
Midway the town, and in its narrow stream
Vessels with corn and lumber laden deep,
Waiting the flood-tide and fair winds for sea ;
While on the banks a dozen ships were building,
To the sound of saw, and adze, and hammer,
Hum of workmen, and the busy rhythm
The many sounds of labor roll into.

A quaint old house stood backward from the street,
With lofty mulberries, and green shaven lawn,
Where being asked to spend their hour of noon,
The children tumbled on the grass, or slept,
While William with his wife, on the broad porch,
Talked with the master of their toilsome way,
The length of road before, and drifted soon
To themes political and threats of war.
The weather-beaten farmer, quite at ease,
As who is not, thrown with a well bred man ?
Gave his opinion on affairs of state,
Heard with respect by one, who, thought concealed,
Not to appear more learned than his friend,
And asked a question, where he might have given
Council more perfect than in books appears.
He loved to find the hoarded grain of wisdom
Beneath the rude experiences of men.

To whom stole Mary, as he talked of wars,
The white rose scarcely paler than her cheeks,
And stood dilating, red and wan, by turns,
Whilst he played on this instrument, her soul,
That like a reed in Pan's hour, wistful, rung
With all the changes poured into her ear.
At last, regarding her with earnest eyes,
" You have an ardent spirit, such an one
As comes but rarely to this troublous world,
Too full of sympathy ; a mystic, too ;
Were you my daughter, I should strangely fear ! "
Then sent the child for flowers, and from her parents
Learned of her gentleness, and kindly ways,

Her thoughtfulness, and love of every creature ;
And called her back, and kissing, gave her books,
And blessed her as the wagon rolled away.

The children much admired the ample gardens,
Gorgeous with flowers, and bending with ripe fruit ;
The sound of builders' axes, and the stream
So sunny deep, and flowing thick with craft ;
And now broad marshes stretching on each hand
Further than eye could see, like green highways
For summer crusades, spangled with strange flowers.
On little mounds grew wild asparagus,
And countless herds roamed grazing at their will.
And every blasted tree, against the sky,
Upbore the huge and cumbrous fish-hawk's nest ;
And powerful on his rowing wings came one,
Holding a blue-fish in his talons, shrill
His screams, and piping from the nest upreared
His hungry brood, while loud was children's laughter.

Wild with excitement was each little heart,
Nor Xenophon with his torn Grecian host
Cried with more rapture to the sounding sea,
Than did this marveling crew, when first the deep
Like heaven inverted gleamed before their eyes.
And thrilled with longing, like a worshipper,
Sunk Mary on her knees, upon the shore,
And wept among the children for great joy,
And could not sleep at night, but heard the sea
Rolling low thunder through the starry gloom,
And in her fancy sailed far away
To foreign lands, and came back rich and great,
To be the saviour of her frugal home.

The sun came out the waters like a god !
How vast the morning seemed ! The little maid
Had never dreamed the world was half so large,
Or half so rich with flying argosies
As now she saw upon the glittering sea.

And long the child, to growing womanhood,
Thought of those days as doors that shut and opened,
Giving rich glimpse of glories unfulfilled,
And shadows this side darkening ever on them.
The books the kind old man had given her,
Plutarch, and Burns, war's trumpet, and joy's song,
Were sybil's voices to her ; and unrest
And yearning, took the old child peace away.
But all the life she yearned for was foresworn—
Travel in foreign lands, gold for the poor,
Large converse with the great, the songs of bards
Fresh flowing from the lips, as she had heard
From tallest trees the mocking bird ring down
Upon the silent choirs, in loveliest May.
But not a murmur rose upon her lips,
The meanest duties of her life she took
With cheerful zest that made them honors seem.
The humble cottage glowed when she came in
As sudden sunlight through the panes had fallen,
And every living creature out and in
Drew to her, loving, and stood still with pain
When she moved from them on her gentle way.

Like perfume to the rose, the grape's aroma,
The smell of peaches on an autumn morn,

About the antique neighborhood was blown,
For beauty, and for loveliness, her fame.
The rustic youth that fain would pluck the flower
That made their hearts uneasy, might not dare,
But on a morn beneath the swinging trees
One mounted on a coal-black charger, saw
The beauteous maid, like Dian, with a hound
Crouched at her feet, and on her hands wild birds,
And on her head, and on her shoulders, birds—
And stopped for wonderment, and heard her sing
Like any bird, a liquid song of joy,
That all the birds piped to, and heard her say :
“Aye, now ye sing with me for it is summer,
And easy ’tis to love when all is fair.
But ah, inconstant, ye will fly away
To foreign fields when most I need you here.”
And he upon the coal-black charger swore
Soft through his lips, “he would not fly,
Were he the bird that nestled at her cheek,
Though Paradise should open. Nay, not he !”
And felt a sudden and delicious warmth
Swoon o’er his senses, mixed with pain and longing,
And while he ached to hear her voice again,
She turned and saw him.

Like a young Apollo,
Beaming his radiant eyes on hers, he spake,
“I had not thought to meet a nymph of old,
By these dim woods, hid in these sandy downs,
And feel as I had left the world behind
And stepped into a page of Fairey Queen.

Pardon intrusion : I was told this way
Shortened by two miles, a long ride to Laurel.”
And heard her lips sweeten the air once more,
And saw the tangled sunshine in her hair
Make aureole, and felt his love, like wine,
Mount in his cheeks, and quick to hide confusion,
Began to tell, “I’m fresh from college halls,
And for a vow I make a pilgrimage,
As palmers old to shrines beyond the sea,
To visit tombs of ancient folk of mine,
And meet the sons of friends my father knew,
Good social hearts that warm into one’s own
Like Christmas cheer, or sunshine in May weather.
Belike your father knew my father, maid,
His name was once a passport to all halls—
Some echo, in his crowded memory,
Of Richard Fleming, may survive till now.”

For pleasure of her beauty, unaware,
Her voice chimed through him like a lute-string stirred,
And how he slipped, a sunbeam, from his steed,
To follow Mary down the long cool lane
He never knew, but talking as in dream,
Between the glowing peach trees, on they drew,
To the low farm-house with its open door.

The sound of bees about it in the flowers,
The wind at murmur in the apple-boughs,
The tall white lilies, like tall princesses,
About the gate, the swallows at the eaves ;
He thought he never knew so fair a scene,
But thought in after years the place was dim
But for the radiance of his hour of love.

Out came the farmer, heard the stranger's name,
And bade him welcome for the sake of him,
Another Richard, known long since in youth.
And told a hunting tale or two, of him,
And laughed, and left them for the distant fields.

An hour had dropped its yellow sands of gold,
Ere Richard rode along the way to Laurel.
A thousand thoughts were teeming in his brain
Of jeweled ladies in their stately homes,
Blue eyes, or brown, that lured a wandering fancy—
And how he'd give them all, and all he had,
And all his brave ambitions for the love
Of that sweet girl, so simple and so pure.

And Mary, through the insect-humming air
Looked after him, and saw him fade away
Through purple pines across the sandy downs,
And felt some essence of her life was flown,
Some vague unrest deep stolen in its place,
Some nice adjustment gone that made her part
Of old familiar things, and knew not why !
But the sparrows knew, and twittering flew away,
The wild bee knew and sought the distant flower,
The hound slunk sideways with an abject air,
The burnished pigeon told it to his mate,
The gorgeous butterfly swooned far and farther off,
No longer lingered Phoebus in the blue.

The mother from the open window leaned
To call the willing maid to some slight toil,
But looked, and knew, and thought of olden time,
And left the fond soul to its revery.

And all the evening, with a tearful eye
Followed her Mary, felt a kinder glow,
Than e'en was wont to move her loving heart.

It was an hour before the dawn of day,
While yet the barn-yard fowl were sleeping fast,
The maid awoke from dreams of plunging seas,
And winds that buffeted the drowsy sails
That bore her down the highway of the world.
Awoke, and from the window, into night,
Leaned o'er the woodbine and her sparrow's nests,
Like any woodland goddess half aroused
To light rain-patter of some fawn's white feet,
And thought "How sea-dreams haunt me all the while,
And th' air with forms invisible is thronged
I faintly guess at, or my spirit knows,
And each calls softly, 'Come into the world !'
But I am like my youngling sparrows here,
That faint upon the nest's rim, and shrink back
From the wide ether and the glowing fields.
And where is any pilot through dim voids
And rolling waves, shall bear me to vast shores,
Or teach me somewhat of this human heart
That beats in solemn rhythm round the world !"

Thus murmured she, the wood-bine stirred below,
And little sleepy sparrows like moths came,
To flutter round her beauty, and grew still,
One in her brown curls, on her white arms some ;
One fluttered out upon a level wind,
The maid's eyes following, as for a sign.

Now, have you ever seen the moonlit morn
Before the East grows rosy, felt the spell
Of glamorous witchery shed upon the night?
All things are seen in large, as Titans see,
And not with human microscopic eyes.
A bank of shadows lies the garden trim,
The flowers are fairy argosies unseen,
That waste themselves in sweetness as they go.
The orchard is a forest, and green woods
Grow to the shaggy vastness of old hills,
And cottages are Eastern palaces :
While floods the yellow moonlight over all
Like a deep sea that reaches to the stars,
And earth lies at the bottom of that sea.
None ever dreamed a romance but hath been
Made somewhere real. Under this moon-deep,
The maid's eyes, following as for a sign,
Saw on his finny wings the sparrow go
Straight as a love-dart, to a giant steed,
That stood like silent thunder, and upbore
A youth titanic, who, as for a sign
Had waited, and now vanished into dawn.

She heard no sound of hoof-beats on the turf,
Yet felt a stir of presence in the air,
Drew satiny palm across her eyes, and looked,
Only to see the first rose-flush of morn,
The first stir of the world, the dewy boughs
Atremble in the breeze and dropping pearls.
But ne'er the less, amid cock-crowing and the cry

Of quails among the corn, she felt she knew
Her sign, and knew the pilot who should be.

And Richard, riding on the marge of day,
Went softly with the sparrow, in a dream.
He had not thought the road from Laurel long,
Though winding after midnight through great pines,
And over solitary streams, that sang
Through reed and fern, about his horse's feet,
For the great bowed moon, all yellow like live gold,
Shone soft enchantments, and his eyes were turned
Like the blind Cupid's in upon his heart,
And that was rapt in soft, delicious fancies.

Lone at her gate he stood, in the moon's last glow,
His eyes like summer swallows, in and out
The windows flying, searching for his love.
And she had risen from her downy nest
To flush the morn with beauty, half surmised
And half surmising, as he rode away.

A FANTASY OF THE GREEN MOUNTAINS.

I LOOKED down on the forest
As out on the emerald sea,
Where the wind with a roll like thunder
Beat the surges violently.
And far up the lonely gorges,
The stress of the tide swept high,
And up the crest of the mountains
Until it tossed in the sky.

And the throe of a fancy seized me :
Those dots of distant men
Were fish that, swam and plotted,
In the sea-ooze and the fen.
And the wreck of a world's endeavor,
Was grateful to their sense—
They fought for their share of treasure
Till the shark had driven them thence.

They fought in shoals and contended,
While the imps of evil, drew,
Them up on their hooks, where folly
Was the bait, with spangles blue.
And ever, Plutus, poised on
His wings, dropped down in the stream,
And bore away the fairest
Sea-maiden in a dream.

“ Oh, where in the hollow lustre
Takest thou me, oh, God ? ”
“ To make thee empress in heaven
In amaranth vales untrod ! ”
Through the distance vast, in splendor,
He flits, self-poised, and her charms
Warm through him like the summer ;
And she trembles with vague alarms.

Thou, too, on thy rock, mermaid,
Slip shining, and fair, as of old,
And sing me some wondrous lyric,
As thou combest thy hair of gold.
The sea-mew, and the serpent,
And the mariner, draw near,
As thou sing'st of love undying,
In thy cavern in the mere.

But thy spell enthralls no longer
My soul, and I crave that thou sing
Of the deep eternal mysteries,
And give me a draught from their spring.
For thy face has been loved too often,
Embraced hadst thou been of men
Ere I knew thee, Treacherous Beauty—
I can not love thee again.

She sank with a moan through the surges
The mariner sailed away,
A cloud hid the sun in his zenith,
And desolate grew the day.
And far down the lonely gorges,
The tide shrunk into the sea,
And the moan of the mermaid a voice was
That pained and haunted me.

PLEASURE.

PLEASURE, for all her deep enchanting ways,
Is but a haughty mistress. She detests
Persistent votaries, but joys to find
Young ardent spirits freshly at her shrine.
These, at the first, she thrills with raptures keen,
Next with a quiet joy, contentment after,
But if they come again she veils her charms,
Gives her embraces loosely, and the fire
That warmed and sparkled through her courtesy,
Dies out, and leaves an autumn in its room.
Who then withdraws, does wisely, but who stays
She smites with ennui, and distaining, hies
With all the brilliance of her maiden hour,
To atmospheres of music, and forgets.

FATE.

RARELY develops any mortal
Into the strong perfection of the soul,
Meant by the genius who dispenses life !
Some coldness of the gods—I know not what,
Withers the germ or blasts the flower untimely.

Else earth were cramped and little for our race—
But nature at her wits' end, solemn fool !
Crowds men in cities, and in huge despair
Blasts them with famine, or in feverish quarrels
Whets one against the other like edged steel,
Where war with murder, makes a holiday.

She lifts a peasant to an ancient throne ;
Drags down the king to dig his food with swine,
And to no purpose, bids all purpose come.
The gods that gave her power, gave not wit
To shape her ends, so, what she builds to-day
She ruins to-morrow, and begins again,
But never in a lofty glory ends.

From savage unto splendor mounts she now,
From splendor unto savage sinks again—
Fate bids her tread the old eternal round.
With tombs has time grown weary, whilst fond life
Lost in amazement, pours his ample flood,
Spendthrift of love and great emprise,
Tricked with false promises, and prey to fiends.

AN OLD AGE FULL OF HONOR.

WHETHER I like your lady, most depends
Upon the face and address of her mother,
For youth becomes all creatures, while old age
Is rarely crown and glory to a man.
On most it sits like burden on a slave,
Or th' Old Man of the Sea on Sindbad's shoulders.
And nature for these last ten thousand years
Failing somewhat, but crafty to the core,
Has made her women with some vice of form,
That like a flaw in fruit, brings on decay
Before the summer of her charms is sped.
To hide the flaw, to blind the eyes of men,
A spell of beauty o'er the mould she flings
Might stay the wandering fancy of a god.
But soon the hour draws on, a haggard wreck
Becomes the glowing creature that had pained
A hundred hearts, and made a fool of one.
I know the trick, I can not be deceived.
I meet the famous beauty, make my bow,
Ask for her mother—thousand times to one
I meet an old age painful to my eye,
Sans grace, sans dignity, and void of wit
Except its bitter flavor, like the dregs
Found in the wine cup when the feast is over.

Though, I have seen, an old age full of honor :
A majesty that, like an autumn sun
Descending in a still and golden air,
Rays out a glory whose enchanting beams
Kindle the furthest faces. But not oft.
Daughter of such an one more precious is
Than all that earth moulds elsewhere into being.
Albeit her mother's spirit, scorning pride,
Had housed her in a peasant's honest flesh,
Or, if the gods consenting, so much worth
Should link itself like melting drops of gold,
Backward through many a royal heart, at last
To Mary on the Mount of Olives, thou,
Who'er thou art, oh, win her, if thou canst !

ALFRED ANTOINE FURMAN.

I WONDER where you wander with the muse,
These golden days of reverie and rhyme,
In what deep aisles you hide yourselves and lose
The importunate world, and head-long hurrying time.
I know which way you went, the very trees
Lean toward you, dryads hasten, and the swan
Swoons thither down the heavens, and the breeze
Gives many a lyric back—oh, there withdrawn,
Forget the cares that haunt us, poet mine,
Dream in her eyes, weave fantasies, and be
Approved by all that goodly company
Who wait upon her fortunes : but, if wine
Of immortality she offer you,
The flagon drain, ere she can bid, Adieu !

FAREWELL.

AND now farewell, for you and I must part ;
The ways divide, the night draws on apace,
The wind grows chill, I thank you from my heart
For all your warmth of courtesy and grace.

If in the night you hear an elfin strain
Blown toward you in the solitudes of sleep,
Know in your dreams, I turned and looked with pain,
And struck the lyre with many a longing deep.

We shall all meet again, time rolls around,
The Spring immortal rises from the bier,
The friend I have shall somewhere else be found,
The rose I lost shall bloom another year.

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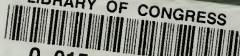
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